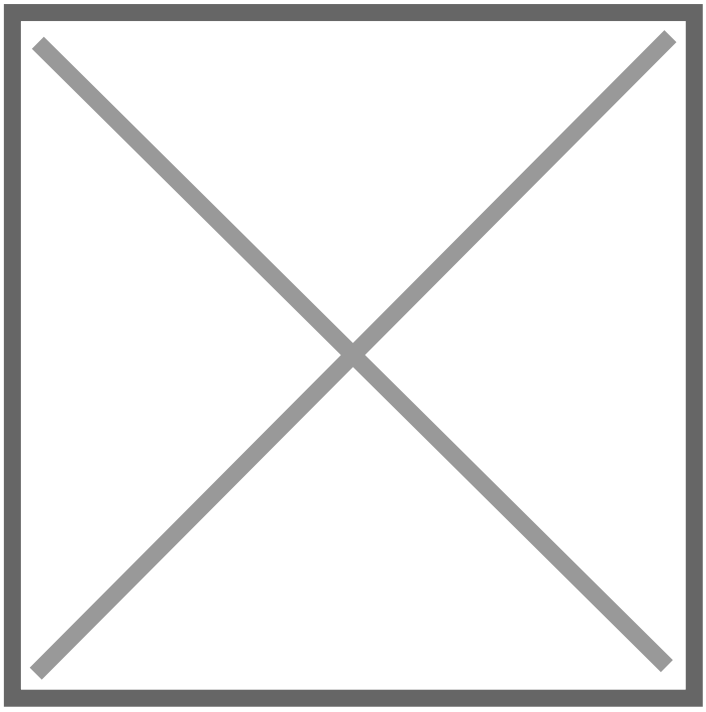
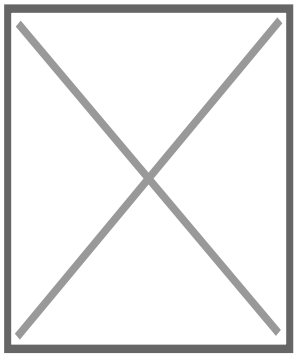
BioSpect
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

BJP bats for Biotech

12 April 2004 | News



BJP bats for Biotech



N.Suresh

The nation is in the election mood. Coupled with the onset of summer and the holiday season, one can safely assume that there will be a lull in the economic activity across the nation for the next few weeks. This, however, does not mean that there is a break in most new economy sectors. Certainly not in the globally integrated knowledge sectors.

Have our leading political parties come to grips with the new realities of our globalizing economy? Will some of the issues, which are of concern to the modern sectors of the economy, figure in the dialogue between the potential rulers and the ruled?

It has been a long tradition in our country for the political parties to seek the people's votes on the basis of a well-defined manifesto. It is no different this time. The country's top two political parties have released their proposed agenda to the people to judge for themselves.

BioSpectrum examined these two documents in detail. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s Vision Document and the Indian National Congress Party's Manifesto 2004 are the key documents, which will have bearing on the nation in the next five years. As BJP is expected to be the leader of the National Democratic Alliance, what it says in its Vision Document will have a major bearing on the NDA agenda. Here, from the biotech point of view, BJP has taken the lead. "We will fully support our biotechnology sector, which is making rapid strides," is an unambiguous statement that should gladden the biotech community. "We will also strive to develop Indian businesses in other frontier areas of technology, such as micro-electronics, nanotechnology, new materials, etc," says the BJP.

There is not a mention of 'biotechnology' in the sleek Congress party's manifesto, which eulogizes the great achievements of its array of Prime Ministers in 45 years. The vision for the nation do not seem to have progressed beyond 1996 and clearly overlooks the major changes that have taken place in the world in the next eight years.

Prof MS Swaminathan's repeated calls for a Second Green Revolution using the modern agricultural technologies too has been given a pride of place in the BJP's vision document. The BJP has promised to promote horticulture, floriculture, sericulture, and cultivation of bio-fuels, medicinal plants and bamboo in a big way. There is no specific mention of its stand on genetically engineered products. The party has expressed support to organic farming. Prime Minister AB Vajpayee has an excellent rapport with Prof Swaminathan who has been given the task of revamping the regulatory framework and facilitate introduction of latest agricultural technologies. Should the party be returned to power, many of Prof Swaminathan's suggestions will get implemented quickly.

Biotechnology industry has been demanding greater interaction between government-owned research centers and industry. BJP seems to have understood the importance of this has clearly stated its move to expand the partnership between Indian businesses and CSIR, DRDO, ICAR, ICMR, ISRO, BARC, IITs, universities and other government-supported research institutions. The party has also promised to actively encourage more foreign companies to set up their R&D centers in India or start joint R&D activities with Indian entities.

More than these, BJP's commitment to remove all obsolete laws, unnecessary procedures, and habitual litigation; non-financial barriers to economic growth such as delays in clearances and decision making would be welcome gladly by the biotech industry.

