

India must occupy prominent slot in global biotech arena: Dr Mashelkar

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If India has to get some respect ability in the global biotech region, it has to occupy one of the top five slots of the big club. With this kind of 37 percent growth year-on-year basis, we hope that India can achieve it without any problem," said Dr RA Mashelkar, director general, CSIR.

Delivering the keynote "Vision Talk" at the CEO Conclave of Bangalore Bio 2006 on June 7, 2006, he urged scientists to convert the present bio-hype into bio-hope for the benefit of common man so that they can reap the benefits. "Biotech is not an end. It is a means to an end. It is to be used for the welfare of the common man and for wealth creation. A lot has been said about biotech. It is not a hype. We have to act fast to convert this hype into bio-hope," he said.

Dr Mashelkar said that with three great personalities occupying the highest offices in the country, the President (a scientist), Prime Minister (an economist) and Union Minister of Science and Technology, Kabil Sibal, "it is the right time to act fast, otherwise, it will be too late."

He also called on the Indian diaspora to help the Indian biotech sector move up to the next level. "The returning Indians have already added to the Indian resource pool. There are around two percent of Indian diaspora working in the Silicon Valley and earns equivalent to India's GDP. We are more interested in their knowledge base rather than the investment they could bring."

"We need to create some movement for transforming bio-hype into bio-hope and bio-activism into bio-rationalism through bio-enterprise, bio-wealth, bio-financing, bio-regulation and bio-education," he said.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Australia occupies the first slot followed by India and China.

Dr RA Mashelkar makes a point during his "Vision Talk" at the CEO Conclave.

He also called upon venture capitalists to take some risks, instead of trading on the beaten path. "They have to be adventure capitalists. If the venture capitalists can take some more risks, these entrepreneurs can definitely make a difference and take Indian biotechnology to a new level. The windows of opportunity is open and it will be open for only a short time."

After IT and BT, Bangalore will be the place for Nano Biotechnology. (NBT) However, Dr Mashelkar coined a new acronym saying NBT should refer to Next Best Technology or New Biotechnology. "India's strength lies in IT, not information technology but Indian Talent. Bangalore has lot of abundance and we should cash on it."