

Bioclusters: An imported American concept

10 July 2015 | News

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KBITS (Karnataka Biotechnology and Information Technology Services) organized a workshop titled [Creation of Mega Biocluster in Karnataka](#) on July 8, 2014, at the soon-to-be opened [Bangalore Bioinnovation Center \(BBC\)](#) in Bangalore.

The workshop brought forward issues dealing with the creation of bioclusters in India, and it also sought to hear and address the plethora of [bottlenecks](#) faced by [biotech start-ups](#) in running their [enterprises](#).

"The key factors for [innovation](#) success are three major ingredients: infrastructure, [human resources](#) and networking. India is a land of challenges. For most of those challenges, the solution lies in life sciences and information technology. Challenges create [opportunities](#) for [innovation](#)," said Dr Jagadish Mittur in his speech, who is the Head of Biotechnology Facilitation Cell, KBITS, Department of IT BT and S&T, Government of Karnataka.

Speaking about collaboration in Life Sciences, Dr Mittur pointed, "In India we seem to work in silos and compete, rather than collaborate. Networking and collaboration are the keys. There are complexities to solutions lying in life sciences. It is time we collaborate and setup facilities needed to collaborate. Necessity is the mother of all innovations. We need to identify rural and urban challenges, define objectives and check the market requirements and benefits for the society."

Currently there are 5 Government of Karnataka (GoK)-enabled upcoming Bioinnovation clusters in the State:

1. Helix Biotech Park in Bangalore (KBITS/IBAB)
2. Nutri/ Nutraceutical and Phyto-Pharmaceutical Park (N2P2) at Mysore (CFTRI)
3. Agri Biotech Park at Dharwad (UAS-Dharwad)
4. Marine Biotech Park at Mangalore (College of Fisheries - KVAFSU)
5. Vivarium (Animal House) at Bidar (KVAFSU)

It was also noted that international bioclusters are also being considered for possible collaborations and design. They include Chuncheon Bioindustry Foundation (CBF), South Korea and Biovillage, Maryland, USA.

Another speaker, Prof H Sharat Chandra, Honorary Director, Centre for Human Genetics (CHG), offered further insights into collaboration.

"It is not easy to create mega bioclusters. Biocluster is an American idea. The idea of bioclusters is to bring together people, technology and ideas and ultimately collaborate, where groups of individuals work together to achieve higher goals which neither of them will be able to do it on their own. In India, we need to overcome the cultural issue of not collaborating. People do not collaborate mainly because of IPR, patenting and competition. If we don't, countries elsewhere will collaborate, develop, evolve products, publish and patent," he opined.

Before narrowing down the location to Electronic City, other locations including Hebbal, Whitefield and Manyata Tech Park (MTP) were considered for erecting the BBC.

However due to various land-related issues, the current Electronic city location was finalized.

"Presence of high-tech equipments and highly qualified personnel will enable successful interaction and collaboration. Bangalore is the VC capital of India. VCs must take risks in encouraging innovation," Prof Chandra stressed.

Prof N Yathindra, Director, Institute of Bioinformatics and Applied Biotechnology (IBAB) gave an overview of start-ups incubated at IBAB between 2002-15.

Only one start-up was incubated in 2002, 2005 and 2008 respectively. However this number increased to 8 with two start-ups each year in 2006, 2009 2011 and 2013.

In 2014-15, 5 start-ups were incubated each year, adding up to 10.

The start-ups include:

- § BioCOS Life Sciences
- § Cellworks
- § Denovo Biolabs
- § Genelife Biologics
- § Geniron
- § Good Herb Therapeutics
- § Indoor Biotechnologies
- § Ixora Biosciences
- § Microtest Innovations
- § MIR Life Sciences
- § Novozymes R&D
- § Omix R&D Lab
- § Pentavalent
- § Privils
- § Scintilla Bio-Marc
- § Shodhaka Life Sciences
- § Simbiosys Biowares
- § StringBio