

Season of Partnerships

04 February 2013 | Views | By Narayan Kulkarni

Season of Partnerships



The new year has started on a positive note ushering renewed interest in biotech investments and collaborations. The last 30 days witnessed over a dozen delegations and nearly 300 delegates coming to India from across the globe to participate in the premier biotech forums in the country. They came here to engage with governments and biotech organizations at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit held in Ahmedabad on January 13, 2013; BioAsia 2013 Conference in Hyderabad on January 28-30, 2013; and Bangalore India Bio 2013 on February 4, 2013.

All these forums are supported by the respective state governments and interestingly all the three events have come at a time when each of these organizing states have been embroiled in political storms. While Gujarat's event came at the time of the state elections, the Hyderabad conference is happening at the time where the state is reeling under the impact of Telangana issue. The Bangalore event is being hosted at the time when there seems to be some instability in the political establishment, where a few members of the legislative assembly have resigned. Despite these upheavals, the conferences have recorded good attendance and commitments to invest, mainly because these three states have a proper system and infrastructure to promote the industry.

Vibrant Gujarat saw about 50 companies expressing their intent to invest in the state at the summit. Almost two-fifth of these announcements were for new operations, while the remaining companies committed to invest in expansions. According Mr Akshay Kumar Saxena, director, Gujarat State Biotechnology Mission (GSBTM), the investment commitment made during the summit was close to Rs 1800 crore.

BioAsia 2013 on the other hand, attracted large delegations from Victoria (Australia) and Spain. The Super Trade Mission of the Department of Business and Innovation (DBI), Victoria, had 14 organizations from the Life Sciences space. The delegates from this mission will also be visiting Bangalore, Mumbai and Delhi. On the occasion, India and Spain announced a joint program for technological cooperation between DBT and Center for the Development of Industrial Technology (CDTI) of Spain. The two nations have called for pushing forward industrial R&D proposals in biotechnology which were already

announced in June 2012. The joint declaration was announced by Ms Carmen Vela Olmao, minister of state research, development and innovation, government of Spain and Dr George John, senior advisor, DBT India. My colleague Vipul Murarka was in Hyderabad for BioAsia 2013 and attended several close door meetings with some of the trade delegations. He reports that the forum saw representatives from nearly 45 countries. Medical devices as a segment has been urged as an important area to invest. According to Mr Kiran Reddy, chief minister, Andhra Pradesh, there are about 120 biotechnology companies in the state.

At the three-day Bangalore India Bio meet from February 4, 2013, the state government would sign MoUs with Scottish Development International; the Department of Economic Development, Georgia, US; and BioAlberta, Canada. The industry will also deliberate on steps that need to be taken to achieve \$100 billion target by 2025 at the forum. This is significant as the 12th Five Year Plan outlay for biotech has almost doubled and nearly Rs 1,400 crore will be allocated for schemes to support biotech innovation. Collaborations are a way forward to forge ahead, and forums like these are meeting points to further the biotech cause.