BioSpectrum the business of Bio & Health Sciences

12 BT finishing schools in Karnataka

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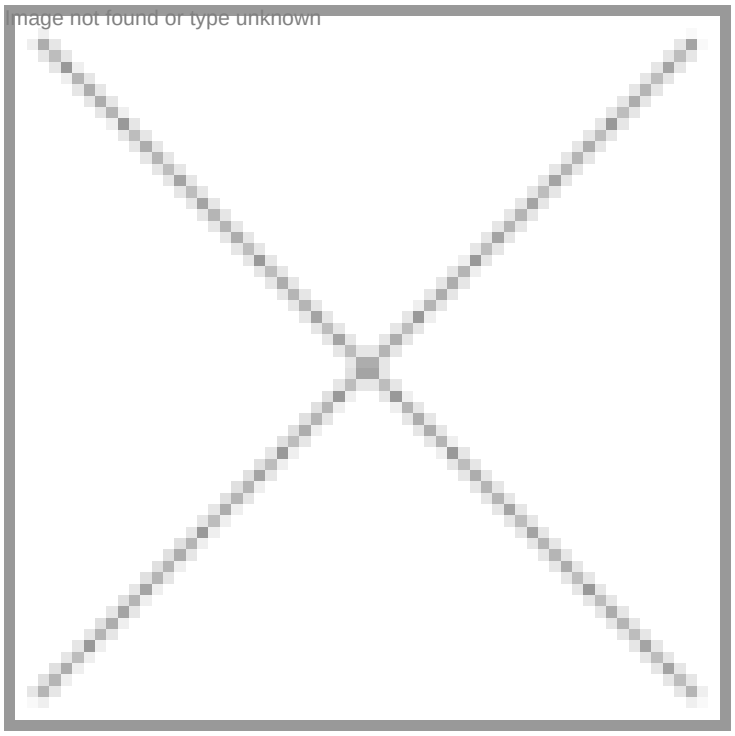

In a gala function on September 15, 2011, the Karnataka government launched the ambitious project of BT FinishingSchools in Bangalore. Twelve biotechnology finishing schools in eight districts of Karnataka were launched on this occasion.

The institutions to host this program were chosen on the basis of available infrastructure and faculty and collaborations with industry. Depending on the facilities available, any of the eight domains, such as fermentation and bioprocessing, cellular and molecular diagnostics, protein expression & scale-up, nutraceuticals and food processing, plant genetic transformation, genome, seed and marker analysis, bioinformatics and rational drug design, pre-clinical, clinical research, biostatistics and data management and plant tissue culture and micro propagation.

The 12 institutions that have been identified are Visvesvaraya College of Applied Sciences, Gulbarga, Manipal University, Manipal, St Aloysius College, Mangalore, JSS University, Mysore, Oxford College of Science, Bangalore, Maharani Lakshmi Ammani College for Women, Bangalore, Padmashree Institute of Management, Bangalore, PES Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Siddaganga Institute of Technology, Tumkur, Probiosis, Bangalore, MM Arts & Science College, Sirsi and Dayanandsagar Institution, Bangalore.

The event was presided by dignitaries, such as Dr Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, CMD, Biocon and chairperson, Karnataka'sVision Group on Biotechnology, Prof Padmanabhan, Indian Institute of Science IISc, Bangalore, Mr M N Vidyashankar, principal secretary, e-Governance, IT, BT and S&T Department, Government of Karnataka.

FDI not equivalent to high price: GSK CEO

Mr Andrew Witty, chief executive officer (CEO) of GlaxoSmithKline, while speaking at the recent annual general meeting of the Organization of Pharmaceutical Producers of India in Mumbai on September 27, said foreign ownership of Indian companies did not equate to high price of medicines. “The reality of the situation is that putting a cap on foreign investments sends wrong signals about India to the world. Foreign investments connect India globally on the R&D front. Foreign companies open doorways for India in terms of exports.”

He added that if India had to go up the value chain, it must focus on drug discovery R&D, which can happen only from exposure of international companies. He also said if the IP regime in India did not address the issue of providing appropriate shield and protection to foreign companies, the probability of high-risk research in India would be low. “Foreign investors need to have some certainty that their risk will be rewarded. This would be a stimulus for R&D in India,” Witty said. He also pointed out that IP protection did not amount to high pricing of medicines.

Later, speaking to the media, Mr Witty said GSK was on the lookout for acquisitions in India but they were more disciplined while allocating capital for acquisitions. “We continue to look out for acquisitions, but the right deals (which are) somewhere in the $1-to-2 billion mark.”

GE, Veran form strategic alliance

GE Healthcare, the $17 billion healthcare unit of General Electric Company, and Veran Medical Technologies, a privately-held medical device company, entered into a strategic alliance to advance and co-develop navigation technologies for interventional procedures to improve the care and management of cancer patients. Building on the alliance, the GE Healthymagination Fund, an equity fund that makes investments in highly promising healthcare technology companies, is investing in Veran.

The alliance between the two companies reflects GE’s healthymagination initiative, which focuses on reducing cost, increasing access and improving quality in healthcare. Veran manufactures the ig4 navigation system which integrates multi-modality information at the point of patient care in the interventional suite and combines that information with electromagnetic tracking of instruments with imbedded sensors. The ig4 system aims to provide interventional clinicians with the best information at the point when they need it most.

GE Healthcare is a provider of comprehensive X-ray imaging solutions that give clinicians the tools they need to take image-based diagnosis and minimally invasive therapy to a new level.

The strategic alliance between the two businesses combined with expanded capabilities in product research and development will accelerate the development of innovative high-value integrated technologies for the diagnosis and care of patients suspected of cancer.

DBT launches online system ePromis

The online system, ePromis, launched in September, 2011, by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government ofIndia, has been developed to enable the submission of the various proposals online and also facilitate tracking of the status of the same. This online system will also provide guidelines for submission of technical reports, annual reports and various financial details required for releasing the grants.

Besides providing the user friendly system for online submission of proposal and various other documents related to ongoing projects, it also provides information about the status of the proposal and the status of the project. The other objectives are to enable online peer review and processing of proposal to facilitate complete monitoring and project management.

The key features of this system include the online registration for new investigators, online availability of user manual,various forms, online access to proposals for review, online proposal evaluation, reduction in time lag and paper work at various stages of processing. Besides that, the principal investigators of the ongoing and completed projects will have login ID and password to track the progress on their project.

This kind of initiative by the DBT can be seen as a major step forward towards the implementation and timely completion of the various projects funded by it across the country.

Praxair expands base in Western India

Praxair India, a subsidiary of Praxair, plans to construct a new state-of-the-art air separation plant in the rapidly growingPune-

Mumbai industrial corridor of western India. The plant, with a capacity of 300 tons per day, is located 60 kilometers from Mumbai, at an industrial estate near Kalyan. It will supply liquid oxygen, nitrogen and argon to customers in the Maharashtra and Gujarat regions, the largest and fastest growing merchant market in India. The plant is scheduled to begin operations in late 2012.

Aurobindo signs pact with Russian firm

Aurobindo Pharma, the largest active pharmaceutical ingredients manufacturer under FDA-approved facility from India, through its investment holding subsidiary and OJSC DIOD, a Russian manufacturer of ecological healthcare equipment and nutrition supplements through its investment holding subsidiary (Diod), announced the establishment of a joint venture in Russia on a parity basis (50:50). The name of the joint venture is Aurospharma Company.

It is established to manufacture and sell the pharmaceuticals in the markets of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. As a part of this cooperation, the JV intends to construct a state-of-the-art plant to manufacture Non Penicillin and Non Cephalosporin Rx generics and other drugs that are categorized as over-the-counter (OTC) products in Russia.

Lilly invests in social initiative

Eli Lilly has committed $30 million over five years to fight the rising burden of non-communicable diseases in developing nations.Lilly is launching The Lilly NCD Partnership, which combines the company's unique resources with the expertise of leading global health organizations, to identify new models of patient care that increase treatment access and improve outcomes for under served people. The partnership will focus on diabetes and, over time, cancer, two core business areas in which Lilly has deep expertise.

Lilly and its partners are in the final stages of developing country-specific programs to launch in early 2012. In India, the partnership has been done with, Find Risc Program, Public Health Foundation of India, Project HOPE, and Population Services International. In Brazil, Lilly has tied up with Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein, Diagnostic & Preventive Medicine and Research Institute. On similar lines, in Mexico, a tie-up has been done with Carlos Slim Health Institute and in South Africa it is with Donald Woods Foundation and Project Hope.

Chronic diseases disproportionately affect the economically disadvantaged, with 80 percent of all NCD deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries.
The Lilly NCD Partnership will complement The Lilly MDR-TB Partnership, a highly successful program launched in 2003 to help address multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, which afflicts some of the poorest people in the world. These programs underscore Lilly's primary corporate responsibility focus on improving health for people in need, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Agilent introduces world's smallest FTIR spectrometer

Agilent Technologies introduced the Cary 630 Fourier transform infrared spectrometer that offers outstanding performance and reproducibility for routine laboratory analysis of solids, liquids and gases. In addition, the new instrument is the smallest and lightest FTIR spectrometer on the market, creating a significant decrease in the instrument's footprint in the laboratory.

Designed with customer applications in mind, innovative sampling accessories slide in and out in seconds, with no alignment required. Intuitive software allows even novice users to accurately analyze samples in just seconds.

The Cary 630 FTIR removes the need to use a liquid transmission cell through Agilent's unique liquid sampling technology, the DialPath and TumblIR.

Waters introduces easy-to-use mass detector

Waters Corporation introduced the Waters® SQ Detector 2, a new single quadrupole mass detector, at the 2011 Japan Analytical Instruments Manufacturers Association (JAIMA) Expo.

Building on Waters' long standing expertise in robust quadrupole mass detection and open access technology, the SQ Detector 2 draws on
recent advancements in Waters' performance leading mass spectrometry systems to produce a detector, which is easier to use and compatible with a broad range of chromatographic techniques. Integrated with Waters' leading chromatographic

technologies, the SQ Detector 2 allows users to take advantage of robust, reproducible data from the widest range of experiments available to a single quadrupole mass detector.

Shimadzu launches compact UV-VIS spectrophotometers

Shimadzu Scientific Instruments has launched the compact UV-2600 and UV-2700 UV-VIS spectro-photometers, which feature advanced optical systems and Shimadzu's proprietary 'Lo-Ray-Ligh' diffraction gratings. The new spectrophotometers substantially reduce stray light, enabling confident and convenient use for routine analysis and demanding research applications.

With its double monochromator design and Lo-Ray-Ligh diffraction gratings, the UV-2700 achieves ultra-low stray light of 0.00005 percent
T at 220 nm. The need to dilute samples has been eliminated by expanding the photometric performance range to eight Abs, with a transmittance value of 0.000001 percent. This range is set to deliver indutry's highest absorbance level and ultra-low stray light.

Thermo Fisher acquires Intrinsic Bioprobes

Thermo Fisher Scientific, the world leader in serving science, has acquired Intrinsic Bioprobes, a manufacturer of unique immuno-enrichment, sample-preparation tools that are used in quantitative mass spectrometry, and enhanced its workflow for biomarker research and diagnostics.

The Intrinsic Bioprobes portfolio enables Thermo Fisher to offer its worldwide life science research and clinical diagnostics customers an enhanced solution for quantitative protein biomarker detection.

The Intrinsic Bioprobes portfolio includes its novel mass spectrometric immunoassay featuring a patented samplepreparation technique.
This technology allows enrichment of low-abundance proteins in biological samples.

Merck Millipore India awards

Merck Millipore has launched the Merck Millipore India Innovation Awards to acknowledge the efforts of scientists for innovative research outside commercial research centers. The announcement was made in New Delhi on September 26.

The program, said to be the first-of-its-kind, will recognize exemplary research done by scientists from government-funded and not-for-profit public institutes in the field of life sciences. The three winners will receive certificates of merit and cash rewards of `3 million, `2 million and `1 million, respectively.

Dr Marek Dziki, managing director, Merck India, said, "We hope to provide Indian scientists with the necessary resourcesand recognition to fulfill their research aspirations and enable them to excel.''

Mr Prantik Mukherjee, head of Merck Millipore in India, said, "The awards program is an apt reflection of our global vision to unleash the potential of science for life.''

Dr Theodor Dingermann, director of the Institute of Pharmaceutical Biology at the Goethe-University in Frankfurt, Germany, and a member of MMIIA's scientific advisory board said, "The scientific community in India is amongst the best but often does not have access to world-class resources and facilities like its global counterparts.''

The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2012. The winners are expected to be announced at a scientific symposium in mid-2012.

India pharma market promising: Report

The pharmaceutical market in India will be the next significant market by 2020, says OPPI & Ernst & Young's latest report. The market presents vast opportunities for pharma companies, with successful companies overcoming challenges in the areas of pricing and access to new products and markets, says the report "India emerging: Pharma's evolving business models".

By 2015, four of the emerging markets are expected to rank among the top 10 global pharma markets, with China and India emerging as the largest gainers. The study has identified India as the preferred choice for outsourcing in the area of late stage drug discovery, shared services and complex manufacturing, while China has been identified as the preferred market for building blocks and intermediates.

With an increase in M&A and partnerships, the contribution of emerging markets to the growth of global pharma market has increased five-fold, from eight percent in 2003 to 40 percent in 2010. Further, China and India have emerged as the top two destinations for acquisitions.

Mr Ajit Mahadevan, Partner-Life Sciences Practice at Ernst & Young says, “Global MNCs that have entered India have developed a deep understanding of their target customers. They have broadened the range of their products, adopted unconventional partnership models to increase access and tested new pricing and marketing approaches.”

New DCGI likely in November

With the three month extension given by the Madras High Court to the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) Dr Surinder Singh set to end soon, the Government of India is looking for a suitable replacement.

The court had permitted Dr Singh to continue as the DCGI only upto October 31, 2011. Therefore, the new DCGI is expected to take over the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) by November this year.

The health ministry, which controls the CDSCO, recently issued an advertisement regarding the recruitment of a new Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) within three months. Earlier, the govt had on June 8, 2011, extended the appointment of Dr Surinder Singh as the DCGI until March 31, 2012. His tenure was to end on June 21 this year.

A public interest litigation against his appointment and extension of tenure led to a government order that the period of deputation of a government servant should not exceed beyond five years. Since Dr Singh had already completed five years on deputation, the court took note of the PIL and stayed Dr Singh’s continuation in office.

His deputation was extended by three more months again after Additional Solicitor General of India Mr Mohan Parasaran assured the court that the government would speed up the process of recruiting a new DCGI.