

Over 350 execs and investors attend USICC summit

Sibal exhorts US industry to invest in India's biopharma R&D offering



Kapil Sibal, minister of science and technology and earth sciences, releasing the McKinsey, USA-India Chamber of Commerce Position paper.

The US-India BioPharma Summit 2008 organized by the USA-India Chamber of Commerce in Boston attracted over 350 senior bio, pharma, medical devices and healthcare professionals. Top 20 biopharma companies were represented by senior decision-makers working on discovery, clinical research and partnership initiatives. Notable among them were Dr William Chin, vice president of discovery research at Eli Lilly, Jim Mullen, CEO of Biogen Idec, GV Prasad, CEO of Dr Reddy's Labs, Venkat Jasti, CEO of Su-

ven, Josh Boger, CEO, Vertex Pharma and chairman of BIO, Dr Mark Powell, senior vice president and worldwide head, pharma development, Bristol Myers Squibb, Jeff Elton, COO, Novartis Institutes of Biomedical Research and Rod MacKenzie, senior vice president, worldwide research, Pfizer and Barbara Yanni, chief licensing officer, Merck & Co and Dianne Kikta, vice president, global clinical, Wyeth Research.

The over 40 leading and emerging companies from India participated. Minister of science and technology and

earth sciences, Kapil Sibal, Dr Surinder Singh, DCGI and Debasish Panda, joint secretary, ministry of health and family welfare represented the Indian government.

In his keynote address, Sibal outlined the concept of an emerging intellectual property regime in India that would not only uphold the interests of indulging pharmaceutical companies. It will also match their investment on a 50:50 basis to built an environment to develop collaborative initiatives to mutual benefits in the field of agriculture, marine and health sciences. Sibal said the challenge was to develop highest quality drugs at the lowest cost. It is important to device different business models as the current models do not work.

Sibal emphasized on novel discovery efforts to meet the need of locals that would pave the road for international success, citing "Nano car" as the prototypical example for his three point mantra—accessibility, affordability and world class quality. He described the ideology of scientific achievement across different nations as a symbiotic ecosystem and not delimited by geographical boundaries. With an open invitation to US companies to shed inhibitions and a promise to offer a congenial fertile environment encouraging public-private partnership, Sibal effectively conveyed the

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idea of stimulating the minds of many corporate heads.

The Drug Controller General of India, Dr Surinder Singh talked about implementation of an advanced “e governance drug regulatory system in India”. This electronic system, unique of its kind, is currently being developed with support from the Indian IT sector to suit the Indian context, following closer understanding of the functioning of its equivalent counterparts in the world - WHO, Health Canada and FDA. This digitalized and interactive portal is being seen as a revolutionary change to centralize the regulatory system and running clinical trials in India ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels.

Dr Singh emphasized on an inbuilt feature for spontaneous and random check by health inspectors to ensure the unmet need for quality and ethical standards that would be central to the system.

On being questioned about the competence of panel deciding the fate of a drug, Dr Singh assured of an impartial and independent panels integrating diverse expertise will be incorporated including academia, medicine, industry and government. Besides, answering to other questions, Dr Singh was optimistic about its success that is instrumental to eventually convince investment even from the private sector. The central philosophy is aimed at cutting short of delay for the entry of drugs through a centralized single register.

A Position Paper prepared by McKinsey & Company for the USA-India Chamber of Commerce was officially released by Kapil Sibal. Titled ‘Thought Starters to Spur US-India BioPharma Collaboration’, the report suggested



(From left): Ajay Dhankhar, partner, McKinsey & Company, Dr Peter Muller, executive vice president and CSO, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Dr Rashmi Barbhuiya, CEO, Advinus Therapeutics, Barbara Yanni, vice president and chief licensing officer, Merck & Co, Dr William Chin, vice president, discovery research, Eli Lilly & Company, Venkat Jasti, vice chairman and CEO, Suven Life Sciences, participating in the discussion on drug discovery and collaborative research.

10 ideas to take the US-India life sciences and healthcare business to the next level.

During a lively discussion on ‘Funding innovation and Cross Border M&A Trends’, Frederick Frank, vice chairman of Lehman Brothers, commented, “Most pharma companies need to introduce more than three new products a year to maintain growth. Given current pipeline and associated costs, there is no chance of this happening.” Frank added, “Biotech companies are good in research whereas pharma companies are good in manufacturing and marketing.”

During discussions on the ‘Drug Discovery and Collaborative Research’, Dr Chin of Eli Lilly emphasized that “Partners need to understand each other, share risk and rewards”. Dr Chin emphasized that winners will be those who can handle all the data, and

that for India this is “a natural thing to capture and win on.”

Barbara Yanni, chief licensing officer, Merck & Co. talked about their deals with Ranbaxy, Nicholas Piramal and Advinus. Merck’s focus on India is “better than most” with respect to accessing innovation, forming research collaborations making bona fide chemical entities with Indian “partners,” not “contractors”. Dr Peter Muller of Vertex Pharma commented, “Collaborative research is not outsourcing but in sourcing of bright minds to solve the most complex problems.”

Venkat Jasti CEO of Suven and chairman, Pharmexcil, urged the Indian government to set up specific panels to expedite the application approval process. He said academic institutions should speed up training of students in chemistry and biology as “disease is complex”. ■



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