

US-India synergy in BioTech and Life Sciences

SAM RAO

Millbrae, Calif.

RESEARCH scientist Beth Furnish from Arizona State University, had come all the way from Chandler, Arizona to get a look at the US-India Synergy in Life Sciences Symposium at the Bay Area Clarion Hotel on November 12. Furnish—along with colleagues who developed a product to increase bloodflow to damaged tissue, wanted to know about the role of the healthcare market in India.

"We are looking into the possibility of development in India, that's one reason I'm here," said Furnish. The packed event was hosted by an Indian-American non-profit called Enterprising Pharmaceutical Professionals from the Indian Subcontinent (EPPIC) and was a comprehensive discussion of cost and value arbitrage in research and development, manufacturing and clinical development.

Keynote speaker Dr Rashmi Barbhuiya and Dr Kasim Mookhtiar—former principal scientists at Ranbaxy Labs, India—spoke at the event. Also present were entrepreneur Dr Bala Manian and Dr Anish Bhatnagar, vice president of Clinical Development at Titan Pharmaceuticals, US, and Dr Ferzan Engineer, CEO of Quintiles India.

Representing the Government of India was San Francisco Counsel General B.S. Prakesh, who outlined the efforts of the Indian government and welcomed more investment and interest in the BT and Life Sciences field. Next, Dr Dinesh Patel, CEO of Miikana Therapeutics, introduced the lineup of speaker from the US and India. Said EPPIC president Ram Mandalam, "We designed the first session as 'Affordable Innovation in Life Sciences,' especially as



(Left) Dr Rashmi Barbhuiya with audience; (above) Dr Ram Reddy of Global Industry Analysts. Sam Rao

outsourcing is being discussed a lot these days." Several US companies, want to explore savings in R&D that India offers without sacrifice in quality. The availability of good equipment and well qualified professionals is also attractive.

Dr Barbhuiya spoke about strengths and weaknesses of doing business in India. "Pure chemistry is the primary strength of India. To be able to compete effectively in Biotechnology, this aspect has to be coupled with developmental activities. The recent alliances of big houses is an evidence of that," he said, referring to the collaborations such as that of between Ranbaxy and Wockhardt Pharmaceuticals.

Dr Barbhuiya outlined the barriers present in India also. He spoke about current inadequate regulations and policy ambiguity in India. He also stressed the concerns of delivery time as many companies do not yet have a proven track record. However, he assured that concerns of safeguarding Intellectual Property (IP) rights in India were overrated. He said that in seeking alliances, team stability, qualifications and proven track record of the com-

pany were essential.

Dr Manian spoke knowledgeably about global trends. A serial entrepreneur who has successfully floated several companies, Dr Manian indicated that he sensed "a great opportunity in Life Sciences and R&D in India"—although he stressed the

sized the need for clear communication and follow-up, saying there was some lack of availability of equipment—even at very good institutions.

Dr Ram Reddy, CEO of Global Industry Analysts (GIA) spoke on global trends and presented a series

of charts outlining the market projections for BT and Life Sciences in India. GIA is the world's largest market research company.

In the second phase, speakers focused on Biologics, or several "generics" of new-age biological products, whose patents have expired or are expiring. This new field is very attractive to many companies worldwide, including India, which has the advantage of savings of nearly 40-50 percent in developing vaccines and achieving clinical trials.

In the U.S. the prohibitive costs of trials and the long cycle for a product to be approved are given reasons for a drop in trials from 63 percent to 26 percent in the last decade. US tests are now primarily done at academic institutions.

"Overall, we were satisfied with the symposium, and have received positive feedback from attendees and speakers alike," said Prasad Jaladi, marketing chair of EPPIC.

BT advancement for Andhra

Andhra Pradesh Secretary of Industries and Commerce Dr B. Kripanandam was at the symposium. Excerpts of his interview with Sam Rao follow:

■ How has the trip been so far?

We were always surprised at the enthusiasm of the people meeting us: NRIs as well as non-Indian-origin people who have heard of progress in India.

■ What industries can we expect in AP and what facilities and services can they expect from you?

We welcome small to medium industries, not just large corporations, who of course are welcome. We actually have made many efforts to ensure that the experience for business is an one-window operation with minimum effort and we have initiated a fast-scheme approval process. Sometimes, people come expecting everything free, but that is not possible. While we will make every effort to assist, we would expect mature

business and well-financed operations to be able to set up industry in AP.

■ There is a concern that since former chief minister Chandrababu Naidu lost, the IT industry may suffer?

There is no need to worry. CM Rajashekhar Reddy has made it clear that good projects will continue. As an agricultural state, we want to make sure that progress is shared by all segments of society.

■ What other initiatives or industries are on horizon?

Tourism is another industry to promote. To cross-promote, we will work with NRI organizations through the AP Department of Culture. Already we are seeing increased interest in BT and Life Sciences—my coming to this symposium will no doubt help interaction. We are opening Knowledge Parks (KP) and Industrial Parks, like the Semiconductor Fab facility on a 50 acre plot of land for nanotechnology initiatives. There is also availability of a 350 acre technology park, with all modern facilities available.

ICC raises, rouses at banquet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Milpitas, Calif.

HER white hair glistening in the spotlight, senior citizen Sunila Fondekar took center stage along with her team of "Jollywood" Dancers. This entourage of seniors proceeded to gyrate and perform to a medley of new Bollywood songs like *Maine Jise Abhi Abhi Dekha Hai*, to vigorous applause from the audience. The performance, along with folk dances by children, was part of the evening fare on November 11 to raise funds for India Community Center (ICC) at the Santa Clara Marriott. Over 600 people attended the second annual banquet, which reportedly raised about \$300,000, designated for children's and senior citizen's programs at ICC.

The MC for the program was popular sports news anchor Raj Mathai of NBC Channel 11. Las Vegas magician Simon Winthrop performed magical illusions with professional stage effects. The featured program of the night was a traditional Qawwali program by Delhi's seven-member Nizami Brothers group. The Nizami brothers were on their maiden tour to the West Coast.

Apart from the ticket sales, funds were raised via a silent auction for various donated items, as well as a professionally conducted live auction. This helped raise nearly \$79,000.

ICC was established in 2000, after acquir-

ing the 12-year old India Community Service Center (ICSC), which catered the Indian-American Community in the Bay Area.

ICC chair Talat Hasan said in a press release, "it was so heart-warming to see such a tremendous show of support from the community. The ticket sales, our numbers at the silent and live auctions represent a buy-in to the ICC vision."

One of the programs earmarked for the funds is a bus service to transport seniors to ICC programs held at Milpitas and Sunnyvale locations. The myriad of children's and youth programs conducted at ICC also got an enthusiastic response from the audience. Offerings include music and dance classes, language classes, and summer, spring and winter camps that range from math camps, art camps, and a Gandhi camp to the playgroup "Parent and Me." Future plans include an offsite preschool and a scholarship program.

The 20,000 square foot ICC HQ also of-



(L to R) Children folk dance at the ICC Banquet; senior citizen Sunila Fondekar, a "Jollywood" Dancer.



Former president of TiE receives honorary degree

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Santa Clara, Calif.



AN HONORARY Doctor of Science degree was given to Kailash Joshi, past president of TiE (The Indus Entrepreneurs) and founding president of the American India Foundation (AIF) at a convocation of the HNB Garhwal University in Uttarakhand, India.

The degree was given for Joshi's work in setting up TiE and the non-profit entrepreneurial (AIF). He was also involved in the re-entry of IBM to India in 1992.

Kailash started his career on the Cornell University faculty, then worked at IBM for 22 years. After retiring early from IBM, Kailash moved to Silicon Valley, where he has been engaged with small technology companies in different capacities.

Kailash holds a B.E. degree from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, a MS degree from Washington State University, and a PhD degree from Cornell. He lives in Milpitas with his wife Hem. His son and daughter-in-law also live in the Bay Area.

