

# Biotech meet aims to double US-India business in 2 years

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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LEADING biotech industry leaders from the United States and India, investors and policy makers participated in the US-India Biotech Summit here last week.

The meet, organized by the USA-India Chamber of Commerce, centered on issues like what needs to be done to double the US-India Biotech business in the next two years and what can be done to accelerate the cross border investments in the life sciences industry. The summit was inaugurated by James C. Mullen, Chairman of Biotechnology Industry Organization and Chief Executive Officer of Biogen Idec. Mullen said that for the industry to flourish it is important to have research-friendly legal and regulatory climate.

"In India, an admirable start has already been made through measures like a well conceived regulatory framework being put in place to approve bio-agricultural crops and recombinant DNA products for human health. Based on sound ethical guidelines, a policy that allows stem cell research is in place," he said. Addressing the delegates, Karun Rishi, President of USA-India Chamber of Commerce emphasized the need for a closer interaction between all the stake holders — industry, investors, policy makers and academicians.

"We need to understand the needs to accelerate the trade and investments in the life sciences industry and take appropriate actions," he said. He said they would soon release the US-India Chamber of Commerce-Ernst & Young Position paper on Indian biotech industry, followed by recommendations based on the deliberations of the summit.

In his keynote address, Dr M K Bhan, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, talked about several initiatives taken by the Indian Government - small business innovation research initiative, centers of excellence to promote innovation, encouragement to biotech clusters, establishment of biotech parks.

"We believe the time to invest in India is now. Investment in India is likely to pay dividends not



(Left) Jim Mullen, Biogen Idec, CEO. Karun Rishi, USA-India Chamber of Commerce President

only for the economic transformation of India, but also benefit a significant portion of the global human and animal population, and our environment," he said. During the panel discussion on discovery, development and regulatory issues, speakers agreed with the potential for growth, especially in the high-end work of discovery. An emerging trend is the symbiotic collaboration between the US and Indian companies in pharmaceutical research and development capabilities.

A step further to cost-based outsourcing, these partnerships reflect increased interest and confidence in India's research competencies and infrastructure. Over \$40 billion is spent annually on drug discovery and development. These funds are spent on a complex process that can span over 15 years and cost \$1 billion for a single drug. Big pharma companies have responded to this by evolving their business models to one of outsourcing activities across discovery and development process, said Bhan. An interesting observation was made by Hari Bhartia, Jubilant Organosys co-Chairman, who has acquired few companies in the US and Europe. He said, "Outbound investments in bio/pharma from India were more than inbound investments last year."