

## Happy 30th Birthday DBT!

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By : Rahul Koul - February 26, 2016



The Department of Biotechnology has turned 30 today. The occasion makes lot of eminent people nostalgic about their association with it. Most of the scientists, academicians and industry leaders involved with it directly or indirectly share their smiles, words and praises on its activities.

Have heard the stories around the department's foundation on a number of occasions from veterans as well as read numerous articles on its good reputation among the other government departments. Having started with a modest budget of around Rs 4 to 6 crore, DBT has come a long way to be counted as one of the efficient departments.

The zeal of promoting biotechnology even when the highest authorities in the then government would have been unaware of this word, made Dr S Ramachandran and Dr C R Bhatia to help laying strong foundations of the department during late 80s and early 90s. That was followed by the passionate hardwork of Dr Manju Sharma and Dr M K Bhan during late 90s and afterwards. No doubt the current secretary, Dr K Vijay Raghavan after taking over the mantle, has been putting tremendous efforts to carry forward the legacy of his predecessors.

As per DBT's online record, its first autonomous institute, the National Institute of Immunology was set up in 1981 followed by the National Facility for Animal Tissue and Cell Culture of Pune formed in 1986 which was later christened the National Centre for Cell Science. The late 1990s and early 2000

saw many other institutes like The National Institute for Plant Genome Research (NIPGR), the National Brain Research Centre (NBRC) followed, the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting & Diagnostics, Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development and the Institute of Life Sciences take shape. Subsequently, several other prominent institutes like Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THISTI), Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine (INstem), National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI) at Mohali, and National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG) at Kalyani in West Bengal were established.

Among the veteran senior advisers at DBT, Dr T S Rao, Dr Jacob John, Dr Sreeshan Raghavan, Dr S R Rao and now retired from Department but active at NII Science SETU program, Dr S Natesh have been closely associated with various remarkable projects spearheaded by the department. The women power from the department is much visible through the formidable work carried out by Dr Renu Swarup, Dr Suman Govil, Dr Meenakshi Munshi and so many other advisors and directors who have dedicated extra efforts to help entrepreneurs and students. My apologies in case I missed few names.

Besides the celebrations at the recent two day “Global Biotechnology Summit” (Feb,05- Feb,06) organized on the occasion of celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day of DBT attended by more than 1500 participants, the important purpose was to prepare a joint action plan for achieving the target for its biotech sector of US\$ 100 billion by 2025. While the DBT has kept the bar high and the mission in the first sight is looking practically impossible but then if the right mix of policy making, vision is followed by strategic partnerships, there is every possibility of reaching closer to it.

Congratulations and best wishes to the team DBT!

### **Key Facts about the Indian biotechnology sector:**

- India among top 12 biotech destinations in the world.
- Second largest producer of recombinant DNA vaccines.
- Houses over 800 biotech companies.
- Targets US\$ 100Bn Industry by 2025.
- Support for capacity building and excellence in life sciences and biotech research.
- 24 Products, 20 technologies, more than 150 IPs generated and 100 entrepreneurs promoted. **(Source: DBT)**