The Biocon India Group is a pioneering, vigorous organization with an impressive track record spanning 20 years of innovations in industrial enzymes, and more recently in pharmaceuticals and contract research. The flagship company, Biocon India Limited, was set up in 1978 as a joint venture between an Indian entrepreneur, Ms. Kiran Mazumdar and an Irish biotechnology company which was acquired by Unilever p.l.c. in 1989 and merged with its subsidiary, Quest International, a food ingredients, flavors and fragrance company. In 1999, Unilever p.l.c. sold its stake to the Indian promoters but Quest International, now a part of ICI p.l.c., maintains an exclusive supply arrangement with The Biocon India Group. The fledgling company has grown from a modest manufacturer of papain and isinglass to a major producer of microbial enzymes, catering to domestic and international needs in the brewing, distilling, processed foods and beverages, pharmaceuticals, textiles, leather, poultry feed and other related industries.

Several of Biocon India’s products enjoy market leadership in their product categories. This success can be attributed to the company’s strong commitment to producing consistently high quality products and backing them up with customized technical support. A substantial part of the group’s resources are channeled to research and development in order to generate new products and technologies, as well as specialized applications for existing products. The most significant dividend of this R&D investment is Biochemizyme India Private Limited, a 100 percent export oriented unit commissioned in 1990 to manufacture a range of microbial enzymes using state-of-the-art, solid substrate fermentation technology.

In 1994, the group promoted Syngene International, a contract research organization, focussed on research in drug development and related areas. The company has a phased program of activities which encompasses contract research in synthetic chemistry and molecular biology encompassing the disciplines of combinatorial chemistry, molecular biology, genomics and informatics. Syngene International specializes in the research, development and manufacture of organic building blocks for the synthesis of biopolymers and the production of specialty biomolecules using recombinant DNA technology. The company aims to take advantage of the highly skilled and creative manpower available in India and compete effectively in the global market, while simultaneously providing a research base for biomedical research in India. The company also hopes to become a key global player in specialty molecules.

Syngene International has recognized the need to synthesize standard and novel building blocks and has...
focused on its synthetic chemistry skills in the area of amino acid derivatives and peptide synthesis. Its in-house expertise in synthetic chemistry enables the company to offer custom synthesis of non-drug related products such as novel flavor compounds, diagnostic peptides, etc. The company’s molecular biology division specializes in the area of heterologous gene expression of recombinant proteins. Syngene’s scientists are experienced in cloning, expression and characterization of target molecules of pharmaceutical interest. *E. coli* and a variety of yeasts are used as expression systems.

In 1997, the group leveraged its proprietary fermentation technology to the manufacture of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and set up Helix Biotech Limited, a pioneering pharmaceutical venture.

The company is involved with the manufacture of bulk actives using technologies developed in the laboratories at Biocon.

The Biocon India Group is currently in the process of being restructured into two focussed entities. Consolidation will help Biocon increase its value proposition as it plans to list in India and eventually in Nasdaq within the next 18-36 months. In phase one, Helix Biotech, Biochemizyme India and Biocon-Quest India will be converted into 100 percent subsidiaries of Biocon India. Within the next few months, about 15 to 20 percent equity in both Biocon India and Syngene International will be offered to private investors. As three of the companies are being converted into fully-owned subsidiaries of Biocon India, a share swap arrangement is being worked out to enable all shares to be transferred to the flagship company.

The Biocon India Group is the largest biotechnology conglomerate in India today with highly automated and modern integrated manufacturing and research facilities set on a 30-acre site on the outskirts of the hightech city of Bangalore in South India. The company has been accredited with the ISO 9001 quality systems since 1993, and is presently preparing itself for the USFDA approval. The group exports its products and services to the USA, Europe and Australasia with a wide and diverse international customer base in food and textile enzymes, and pharmaceuticals.

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