Cooperation for synergy and complementation of strengths; thirdly, broad participation in bioinformatics information and software sharing.

Fourthly, building a shared bioinformatics computational infrastructure, from the underlying advanced networking framework to computational hardware resources through a full cooperative programmatic effort of the entire bioinformatics community including industry.

Lastly, reinforcing and expanding areas of bioinformatics expertise through systematic and institutionalized human resource development, technical training, scientific exchanges, outreach and awareness at all levels of scientific manpower, including scientific policy makers and other decision makers.

The Asia Pacific Bioinformatics Network (APBioNet) is a non-profit, non-governmental, international organization founded in 1998. Its mission has been to pioneer the growth and development of bioinformatics awareness, training, education, infrastructure, resources and research amongst member countries and economies.

**China Faces AIDS Disaster**

A United Nations report warns that China is facing an AIDS disaster of “unimaginable proportion” and could soon have more HIV cases than any other country in the world.

The document titled Aids in China, New Millennium — Titanic Challenge blamed insufficient government leadership and commitment for hindering an effective response to the AIDS crisis and called for urgent action.

It said, “A HIV/AIDS disaster of unimaginable proportion now lies in wait to rattle the country and it can be feared that in just a couple of years, China might count more HIV infections than any other country in the world.”

“We can still prevent the worst from happening, but time is quickly running out. Now then is the time to act.”

**Rising Indian Applications for US Bulk Drug Market**

Applications from India to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for selling bulk drugs, the key ingredient in any medicine, has jumped from 1.8 percent to 6.2 percent of all such applications in the last five years.

Cipla tops the chart with 47 applications, followed by Ranbaxy Laboratories at 34 and Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories at 29. Other companies include Wockhardt, Ipca, Unichem, Lupin, Neuland, Divis Lab, Shasun and Zydus Cadilla.

Bulk drugs represent a huge opportunity but leading Indian companies hope to move up the value chain to finished dosage forms where margins are better. Ranbaxy...
Trends & Prospects

Foreign brokerage Credit Suisse First Boston (CSFB) reported that Indian companies are able to gather a lot of market intelligence about end-product plans of US generic companies because of their API (bulk drug) operations, as they have been contacted for API supply or technology know-how. So bulk drugs gives an edge in the finished dosages market.

The demand for cheaper medicines is gaining momentum in the US. The government is rewarding companies who speed up the entry of low-cost generics into the market, by challenging patents filed by behemoth drugmakers. All of this may lead more Indian firms to the US market.

In a pharma industry overview, brokerage JM Morgan Stanley said that 50 percent of all Indian drug master file (DMF) submissions (applications for selling bulk drugs, chemical, etc.) in the past 33 years have been made in the last five years. Indian pharma companies have filed 451 DMFs between 1969 and first quarter of 2002. Of these, 232 were filed after 1996.

CSFB noted that Indian companies are “increasingly being accepted/preferred as raw material supply source” in the US. While China is also an alternative, they are not seen on par with India on quality issues, it said.

The US$11 billion US generic (off-patent) market has attracted the interest of Indian companies primarily because of increasing competition in the low-growth domestic market, and the imminent product patents regime in India from 2005, which will make it virtually impossible to copy patented drugs.

Some companies also need cash to plough into original drug discovery, which they never had to do before. Decades of reverse engineering — making the same product by a different process — in India is now making it relatively easy for local companies to duplicate this process abroad.

Patent News

India

Bharat Biotech Patents
Unique Molecule To Treat Infections

The Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Ltd. has developed a new expression system of mature lysostaphin molecule and obtained a patent covering more than 100 countries including the US.

Bharat Biotech is one of the few companies in the world to have this unique molecule patented and plans to take it further by conducting animal and clinical trials.

Mr. Krishna Ella, chairman and managing director of Bharat Biotech, said, “The company is scouting for a partner to out license the molecule for further development and commercialization.” It is currently in talks with two US-based companies.

The development assumes significance as the US-based Biosynexus had recently licensed out the pro-lysostaphin anti-bacterial technology for a US$15.4-million deal from Ambi Inc. for developing and marketing new drugs for human application.

Moreover, the molecule has a wider range of application in skin and tissue infections among others, and reacts faster than pro-lysostaphin, on the basis of evidences gathered from administering the molecule to transgenic animals.

The molecule was under development for two years at the Center for Biotechnology under the central department of council of scientific and industrial research, and further research was conducted at the company for a year before getting it patented. The center will be entitled to royalties under an agreement, says Dr Ella.

Global market potential for the molecule is pegged at US$12 billion, of which human infection and animal infection in the US alone is around US $2 billion and US $1.7 billion respectively. In the US alone, 500 000 patients are hospitalized annually due to this infection and 30 percent of mortality from endocarditis is caused by S. aureus.