

A report on International Conference on New Horizons in Biotechnology (NHBT-2015)

The International Conference on New Horizons in Biotechnology 2015 (NHBT-2015) was organized by the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology jointly with the Biotech Research, India (www.brsi.in) during November 22-25, 2015 featuring the latest developments in the frontier areas of biotechnology, including industrial biotechnology, biofuels and bioenergy, agricultural biotechnology, biotechnology in diagnostics and therapeutics, biotechnology in environmental remediation and waste management at Hotel Residency Tower, Trivandrum.

The conference was attended by about 600 delegates from across the world. The eminent speakers included Patrick Hallenbeck from University of Montreal, Canada; Robin Anderson from US Department of Agriculture, USA; Mohamed Taherzadeh from University of Boras, Sweden; G R Castro from University of La-Plata, Argentina; Claude-Guilles Dussap from University Blaise Pascal, France; Michael Bott from Institute of Bio and Geo Sciences, Germany; Andres Floto from University of Cambridge, UK; D J Lee from National Taiwan University, Taiwan; Hao Huu Ngo from Australia; Christian Larroche and Philippe Michaud from Polytech Clermont Ferrand, Institut Pascal, France; Michael Herrmann from Germany, and from Indian C S Nautiyal from CSIR-NBRI, Lucknow; D B Sahoo, IBSI, Imphal; R S Sangwan, CIAB, Mohali; Javed Agrewala, CSIR-IMTECH, Chandigarh; S Venkata Mohan, CSIR-IICT, Hyderabad; T Bhaskar, CSIR-IIP, Dehradun; Pramod Wangikar, IIT Bombay; I S Thakur, JNU, New Delhi; S N Upadhyay, BHU, Varanasi; Swaroop Sarangan, Reliance Industries Ltd, *etc.* The conference had 24 technical sessions, organized into three parallel sessions each day with a total of 106 invited lectures on the most advanced topics in different disciplines.

In his welcome address, Prof Ashok Pandey, Chairman, NHBT-2015 mentioned that the NHBT forum, which was holding its sixth edition of 4-yearly

Biotechnology Conference being organized by CSIR-NIIST in collaboration with the BRSI has been successfully in disseminating the knowledge and developing networking and collaboration across the globe, not only for scientific R&D but also for industrial linkages. In his inaugural address, Dr Ajayaghosh, Director, CSIR-NIIST emphasised the importance of need-based research that address the welfare of the society at large. Subsequently, NHBT-2015 abstracts book and BRSI Yearbook 2015 were released by the dignitaries on the dais.

Prof D J Lee, Chairman, IFIBiop, Prof C G Dussap Charter President, IFIBiop and Prof D Madamwar, President, BRSI felicitated the gathering. Subsequently, the annual awards function of the BRSI was held, in which awards under different categories were announced and given to the respective awardees. The Overseas Fellow award was given to Dr Sunil Kaul, AIST, Japan; Honorary Fellow to Prof Kasturi Datta, JNU New Delhi, Fellow to Dr R S Prakasham, CSIR-IICT Hyderabad, Prof R S Verma, IIT Chennai; and Dr Shailendra K Saxena, CSIR-CCMB Hyderabad; Life-Time achievement award was given to Prof S N Upadhyay, BHU Varanasi and Prof P Gunasekaran, MKU Madurai; Woman Scientist award to Dr K Pandima Devi, Alagappa University, Karaikudi; Young Scientist award to Dr Amit Mishra, Devi Ahilya University, Indore; AU-CBT Excellence awards for research scholars to Mr G N Nikhil, CSIR-IICT Hyderabad; Ms Leya Thomas, CSIR-NIIST, Trivandrum; Nagarajan Raju, IIT Chennai; and Mr Suresh Babu, CSIR-IICT Hyderabad; Malaviya Memorial award for Senior Faculty to Prof Rintu Banerjee, IIT Kharagpur and for Young Faculty to Dr Rajesh Rastogi, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. The inauguration of a mini-exhibition followed the award function. In the end, a cultural programme was organized by the students from Gulbarga, Patiala and Trivandrum, who presented various classical and cinematic dances, including a group song by the CSIR-NIIST TeamBiotech students.



Dr A Ajayaghosh inaugurating the conference



Release of BRSI Yearbook 2015



A glimpse of opening session



Inauguration of the exhibition



Prof Ashok Pandey giving the concluding remarks in the closing session



Cultural program artists with Dr. Ajayaghosh and Prof Pandey

The highlights of the conference were two major symposia—one on Biomass and Biorefineries, and another on *Mycobacterium* and Infectious Diseases. Besides these two major symposia, the conference was unique in having an industry-young researcher interactive session on 25th November 2015, where the budding young researchers had an opportunity to interact with the top industry representatives to address their queries and concerns. This session was moderated by Dr Narayanan Suresh, Group Editor, Biospectrum and had Dr Swaroop Sarangan, Reliance Industries Ltd, Mumbai; Priyangshu M Sarma, BT Technologies, Guwahati and Mr Mahendra Savadikar, HTBS, Pune as panellists.

There were about 400 poster presentations in three days, which covered areas, including industrial biotechnology, biofuels and biorefinery, environmental biotechnology, food and agricultural biotechnology, medical biotechnology, basic and applied molecular biology and bioinformatics. Best posters in each session received awards sponsored by Elsevier and BRSI. Major works presented in the conference would be published in the special issues of leading journals – *Bioresource Technology*, *Renewable Energy* and *Biologia*.

The closing session of the conference was held at 4.30 PM on 25th November 2015 attended by some 425 delegates. Dr Sheel Nuna, Director General

(India), Queensland University of Technology, Australia was the Guest of Honour. This session witnessed the Best paper awards (2014) for 10 top cited authors for Bioresource Technology, which was announced by Dr Katherine Eve, Executive Publishing Editor, Elsevier, who also gave Elsevier Best Posters awards to the winners. NHBT Best Posters awards were given by Dr Sheel Nuna and Dr Ajayaghosh. Prof Datta Madamwar announced IIT Mumbai as the venue for the XIII Convention of the BRSI to be held during December 8-11, 2016. Prof Pramod Wangikar, as the convenor of the convention made a presentation on the outline and plans and invited the members of the Society to participate. The concluding remarks were made by Dr A Ajayaghosh and Prof Ashok Pandey.

The conference was supported by International Forum for Industrial Bioprocesses (IFIBiop); International Organization for Biotechnology and Bioengineering (IOBB); world's leading scientific publishing house—Elsevier, UK; Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi; Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi; Kerala State Council for Science Technology and Environment, Trivandrum; State Bank of Travancore, Trivandrum; Springer; Anchrom Enterprises (I) Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai; Biotech Express, New Delhi; Crescent Lab Equipments, Cochin; Eppendorf India Ltd; Hi-media Laboratories

Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai; Inexus Biotech Pvt. Ltd., Chennai; Inkarp Instruments Pvt. Ltd.; Invitrogen Bioservices India Pvt. Ltd., Bangalore; MARS Bioanalytical Pvt. Ltd., Delhi; Reliance Industries Ltd., Mumbai;

Researchco Books & Periodicals Pvt. Ltd., Delhi; Sisco Research Laboratories Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai; and Thermo Fisher Scientific India Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai. Kash Biotech was the media partner for the conference.

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