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After the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) rejected Monsanto India's Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) cotton variety, MECH-915 for sowing in the northern states, it is making all efforts to continue its field trials of Bt cotton through other hybrids. North Indian companies such as Rasi and Ankur, who have the co-license for Bt cotton will continue to have access to the Bt gene after the trials. Trials are being held in various universities in north India besides the Indian Council for Agricultural Research fields.

Tata group eyes biotech for diversification

The Tata group is looking at investing in new business ventures like biotechnology and alternative medicine. Still the plans are at an exploratory stage and no firm decision has been taken up on the issue. A report said although biotechnology offers hope for investment, there are several ethical, legal and other issues that complicate the matters for the group. Hence, the Tata's are a bit wary of entering this area. But they are examining the options, according to media reports.

Orchid Chem to launch BT products

Orchid Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd is to launch biotech products from its joint venture partner in China, NCPC group's basket in the Indian market. The company will introduce the products in the current financial year. According to K Raghavendra Rao, managing director, Orchid Chemicals, the first phase of the joint venture with NCPC group will be

operational in the next six months. The company plans to file eight DMFs (Drug Master File) and four ANDAs (Abbreviated New Drug Application) with the US FDA this year

Assocham sees good days for Indian biotech sector

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) estimated that India will be a major global player in biotech product exports by 2010 with over \$4 billion investment finding its way into the country. A paper published by Assocham noted that the demand for existing and new biotech products in India has increased exponentially. Nearly 70 percent of these products were produced through local capabilities and skills and the awareness about availability of such products too has risen. It is estimated that this production will increase to about 80 percent by the year 2005.

Molecular Connections enters into alliance with Triesta

Hyderabad based Molecular Connections Pvt Ltd, a bioinformatics company, has entered into a strategic alliance with the US-based Triesta Sciences, a clinical genomics company, for biomarker discovery and validation. As part of the alliance, Molecular Connections will provide its advanced information extraction informatics and pathway analysis expertise for Triesta Sciences biomarker discovery program.

Anna University to set up biotech center

Anna University in Tamil Nadu has created a center for biotechnology with the funds donated by Indian wing of Amersham Biosciences Ltd, the leaders in various products in bioprocess, chromatography, drug discovery and bioinformatics. The biotechnology center would develop R&D activities in the area of drug discovery by creating industry-university interaction. The center would accelerate the conversion of specific scientific results to product development, said E Balagurusamy, vice chancellor, Anna University.