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(Centre for International Trade In Technology)

PM urges scientists to pep up R&D

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asked scientists to speed up their research and deliver critical technologies on time for the nation to achieve self-reliance to keep pace with competitors in defence technology.

Addressing defence scientists on the occasion of National Technology Day, the PM said that, "In many areas we have moved fast but less than that of our competitors. It is a fact our current level of self-reliance in defence R&D is less than our capabilities and it needs to be stepped up significantly."

In a statement DRDO Chief VK Saraswat called upon the three Services to overcome their temptation to induct the latest weaponry from abroad. "We must strive for leadership in R&D in defence technologies".

"The total production value of the major systems inducted into the Services has reached a (whopping) figure of Rs. 68,000/- crores during the last decade, with the modest R&D investment of about Rs. 3,000/- crores per year," he said, adding, "self-reliance index will certainly be enhanced with new major systems like MBT, LCA, Radars and Electronic Warfare Systems being inducted into Services."

While presenting a roadmap, Mr. Saraswat said the DRDO's goals would focus on Space and Cyber Security, Hypersonic Vehicles, Directed Energy Weapons and Smart Materials, Composites and MEMS (Micro-Electromechanical Systems) -based Sensors....

(The Financial Express, 27 May 2010)

Trivitron, IIT-Madras partner for biomedical R&D

A centre to design "innovative and cost effective" medical technology solutions for India and other emerging markets has been set up at IIT-Madras. This is the country's first industry-academia partnership in the \$3.3-billion medical technology industry that includes manufacturing right from gloves to MRI scanners.

Trivitron Healthcare, a Chennai-based medical technology manufacturing company, signed a MoU with IIT-Madras to set up Trivitron Innovation Centre, a centre of excellence for biomedical R&D and design in IIT Madras.

The centre will focus on inventions in medical technology, invent concepts, design "unique" products and obtain patents with an access to scientists and academicians on the IIT campus. The alliance will begin by designing and developing medical device products in the areas of critical care, renal care, lab diagnostics and imaging diagnostics, according to a company press release.

Dr G.S.K. Velu, Managing Director, Trivitron Group, said while the medical services and the pharmaceutical industry (this is a \$10-billion industry in India) have marched forward, the medical equipment manufacturing has been left behind. In of the \$3.3-billion industry, nearly \$2.5 billion worth of equipment is imported due to lack of manufacturing here. The company will invest nearly Rs 2 crore in the centre. The intellectual property will be owned by the company and IIT-Madras, he said. In the last 15 years, China has built a \$13-billion medical technology industry. From a major importer, China today is the world's third largest producer of medical equipment, he said.

(The Hindu Business Line, 27 May 2010)

Mercedes, IIT Delhi tie up for new diesel tech

Mercedes Benz India has joined hands with IIT Delhi to work in the area of BlueTEC technology, which is likely to be used to develop new generation high-tech diesel systems. These engines claim to be the cleanest in the world in every vehicle category.

The focus for the company in India is on low weight vehicles at optimal cost, without any compromise on performance. Engineers in Bangalore are working on key components such as clean diesel technology, safety equipment, batteries for electric vehicles and crash simulation amongst others.

(The Financial Express, 26 May 2010)

China Wireless to set up R&D centre in India

The Hong Kong-based smart phone manufacturer, China Wireless Technologies Ltd, has planned to set up a R&D centre in India by the end of this year, as part of a Rs 400-crore investment plan in this country. It has also planned a handset manufacturing unit a few years down the line, once they manage to sell about five million units. They believe this level would be reached by 2013.

The CDMA telephony market in India is around 120 million subscribers; in China, it is 50 million. India is an important market for the company. India CDMA telephony operators are providing basic handsets to their customers and there is good potential for middle and high-end handsets, which Coolpad will focus on. Al-Lawati noted around 30% of CDMA subscribers use smart phones. Coolpad is planning to launch dual mode (CDMA and GSM) at the high-end bracket.

Presently, China Wireless has a 12-million unit per annum plant in China and derives 95% of its revenues from that market. Tying up exclusively with Reliance Webstore Ltd, the handset company has launched the country's cheapest touch screen CDMA phone, S100, at less than Rs 4,500 in India.

(Business Standard, 26 May 2010)

Local content to shine in solar photo-voltaic projects

The Ministries of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) and Power plan to make it mandatory for solar power developers to source crystalline silicon-based modules from domestic manufacturers. However, they can import solar cells for manufacturing these modules for the photovoltaic (PV) projects.

This provision will be in the soon-to-be notified guidelines by the Ministries for implementation of the solar power projects under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM).

Tata BP, Moser Baer, Indo Solar, XL Telecom & Energy and Solar Semiconductor have been traditionally manufacturing and exporting solar cells and modules to Europe, Japan and the US. The players are slated to have a total capacity of 750 MW by the year end.

Stating that all cell and modules produced in India are available for sale in India in line with the WTO agreement, the industry officials said, "Domestic manufacturers have no export obligation forcing them to sell abroad. If they have been selling abroad so far, it is because of the non-existence of a proper grid-connected solar market in India. Mandatory domestic content should not be limited only to Phase-I but for the entire JNNSM projects covering Phase II and Phase III as well. This will ensure that the Indian PV manufacturing capacity expands in line with the rising targets of the Mission."

(The Hindu Business Line, 22 May 2010)

Novartis plans ayurveda debut

The Indian arm of Swiss pharmaceutical major Novartis AG is set to become the newest entrant in the ayurvedic business. Novartis, already a major player in the Indian over-the-counter (OTC) segment with household brands like Calcium Sandoz, is exploring the potential of ayurveda to take on the wide array of ayurvedic pain relievers, energy boosters, skincare products and cough-cold remedies that are dominating the domestic market.

According to sources, Novartis' ayurveda foray could make a qualitative difference in the manner such products are developed and promoted in India today. The company's global policy mandates stringent quality tests and clinical trials for every product it introduces, even if not legally required under the domestic laws that govern food supplements, nutraceutical products or ayurvedic medicines in the country.

The initial focus for the company is known to be in the areas of skincare, fungal infection and lifestyle category and Novartis may initiate clinical trials on ayurvedic medicines in these areas soon.

The current market size (of the OTC segment) is over Rs 5,000 crore. Domestic OTC market is growing 16% ahead of the 14% overall growth in pharmaceuticals business. Higher disposable income among Indian public and increasing tendencies to go for preventive healthcare and self medication will aid this growth. Many of the non-prescription products that can be sold without doctor prescription come under "household remedy category" specified in the Schedule K of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act 1940.

The leading brands in the domestic OTC segment include Pfizer's Benadryl, Piramal's Corex, Ranbaxy's Revital, Cipla's iPill etc, experts said.

(Business Standard, 21 May 2010)