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Britain woos India as biotech research partner

Tuesday, 19 February 2008 |

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Chennai, Feb 19

- A team of senior British scientists is touring south India to meet R&D and private sector institutions and highlight their expertise in life sciences and stem cell research.

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The team has showcased Britain as an investment destination for hi-tech research and explored opportunities for collaboration and commercialisation of biotechnology with Indian companies.

Britain is a leader in stem cell research with 3.4 billion pounds (\$6.64 billion) funding in 2007-08. It is also a pioneer in regulation of the use of embryonic stem cells, the British High Commission said here.

British firms have developed 40 percent of Europe's biotech products in late-stage clinical trials and the country is home to nearly half of Europe's biotech firms. It now wants Indian companies to make use of this expertise.

'New drug discoveries in biologics are beginning to outstrip those of the conventional pharmaceutical sector,' Mike Connor, British deputy high commissioner in south India pointed out at an interaction between the British scientists and Indian institutions here.

'I am delighted that the British team is visiting south India and hope that institutions in both countries will work together to build mutually beneficial partnerships,' he added.

The team is visiting the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science and the Manipal Institute of Regenerative Medicine in Bangalore and the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad.

In Chennai, the team met LifeCell, Jeevan Blood Bank and Nichi-In Centre for Regenerative Medicine and diabetes experts.

A team member, Colin McGuckin, the first professor of regenerative medicine at Newcastle University, said: 'Stem cell technology can reduce pharmaceutical R&D by 25 percent each year, with savings of up to \$225 million in each drug market.'

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