

News Details

Biotech Opportunist

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CIRCA 1986, KRISHNA M. ELLA WAS A TECHNICAL OFFICER at Bayer's Indian operations. Today, he is one of India's foremost biotech entrepreneurs. And in

the 18 years separating the two dates, he has been a scholar at the University of Hawaii, served as a research professor at the Medical University of South Carolina, completed a PhD from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, sold all personal assets and relocated to India at the suggestion of his wife Suchitra, and, along with her, co-founded Bharat Biotech in Hyderabad. The last was in 1996 and in the eight years since then, with Krishna in charge of technology and Suchitra, marketing and communications, Bharat Biotech has grown into a Rs 31-crore, multi-product biotech company. Since 1998, the company, which hopes to touch Rs 500 crore in revenues by 2008, has launched two vaccines (its best-known is Revac-B, a recombinant vaccine for Hepatitis-B), a probiotic yeast, and a recombinant streptokinase used in the treatment of myocardial infarction. On the anvil is REGEN-D, a recombinant epidermal growth factor (think: the answer to burns). Products, however, can only take the company so far; most biotech analysts see Bharat Biotech's future in contract research and manufacturing. Krishna is aware of this: the company has been involved in the manufacture of HibTITER (Haemophilus Influenzae b Conjugate Vaccine, and it prevents a kind of meningitis) for Wyeth Lederle, the first instance of the vaccine being made outside the US and is manufacturing Recombinant Human Lactoferrin for American firm Agennix Ltd. That's a start.