A Report on the ‘51st Annual Conference of Association of Microbiologists of India (AMI) (December 14–17, 2010; Venue: Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra, Ranchi, India)

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Association of Microbiologists of India (AMI) is one of the most reputed scientific organizations. It provides a scientific forum for young professionals in microbiology, biotechnology and other allied disciplines. AMI holds its annual conferences at some premier established centres of microbiology in the country. In this series, the 51st Annual Conference of AMI being organized at Birla Institute of Technology (BIT), Mesra, Ranchi, in association with Birsa Agricultural University and Central University of Jharkhand during December 14–17, 2010. The conference ‘Recent Advances in Cross-disciplinary Microbiology: Avenues and Challenges’ included plenary and panel sessions along with poster presentations. More than 1,300 delegates including 16 speakers representing countries such as USA, UK, Australia, Sweden, Slovak Republic, Germany, Nigeria, Japan, Finland and South Africa attended this conference.

During inaugural programme the chief guest, Shri M. O. H. Farook, His Excellency, Hon’ble Governor of Jharkhand and Chancellor, BIT Mesra addressed the need for microbiologists in the country and emphasised the role of such conferences in bringing the researchers from academia, industry and government together towards knowledge contribution for country. Guest of honour, Shri S. K. Sahay, Hon’ble Union Minister, MoFPI, Govt. of India appreciated the organizers for their efforts and about the support of ministry on special session: ‘Food microbiology and food processing’ and reiterated the support to AMI. Prof. Ajay Chakrabarty, Vice Chancellor, BIT, Mesra welcomed all invited speakers, guests and participants.

During the presidential address, Prof. Gaya Prasad, President AMI deliberated on the growth of AMI. Further, Prof. R. C. Kuhad, General Secretary, AMI and President Elect-2011 presented the overview of AMI and its recent developments and contributions of scientists and academicians in making it a stronger organization. He urged microbiologists to take initiatives for fighting new and emerging diseases and working for human society. Prof. P. Ghosh, Chairman, Organizing Committee highlighted the importance of cross-disciplinary research areas of microbiology.

Prof. H. P. Klenk from DSMZ, Germany delivered the keynote lecture on “The Microbial Earth project: Genome Sequencing of all cultivated strains of bacteria and Archaea”. Prof. Klenk briefed about his project and urged all interested microbiologists to learn newer developments in cross-disciplinary microbiology. He further explained this as a grand project that was backed by over 60 leading scientists from Asia, America, Australia and Europe. He commented ‘I am one of four PIs that currently organize this world wide initiative and I hope that Indian scientists at AMI-2010 will also get fascinated by this initiative’. During ASM-AMI joint session, Dr. Sunil K. Lal from ICGB, New Delhi discussed about ‘the molecular biology of Influenza A viruses. In the same session, Dr. Barbara J. Mann and Prof. K. Dhan from USA discussed significant issues related to medical microbiology.

For the first time in AMI, an international workshop on ‘rRNA sequencing, phylogeny and next generation genome sequencing’ was also conducted, where the resource persons shared their expertise with participants. In one of important deliberations, Prof. Rup Lal from Delhi University, India discussed about sequencing bacterial genomes using different sequencing platforms. Further, during the special session on ‘food microbiology and food

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processing', Dr. M. K. Rout, leading food scientist from CSIRO, Australia deliberated on 'physical ageing, annealing and relaxation behaviour of some proteins'. Further, Prof. G. S. Randhawa from IIT Roorkee, India delivered an exceptional lecture on 'studies on auxotrophic and stress tolerant strains of rhizobia'. In panel discussion of this session, many eminent food biotechnologists discussed the possibilities of research and technology development in food processing.

During G. B. Manjrekar award lecture Dr. Amulya K. Panda from NII, India delivered his talk on vaccine development. In addition, Dr. S. Shivaji from CCMB, Hyderabad, delivered a talk on 'Microbes from cold habitats: Biodiversity and cold adaptations'.

Concisely the scientific programme of AMI 2010 was composed of 13 technical sessions, where 21 invited lectures and 850 posters were presented. The few significant themes of this conference were agricultural and soil microbiology, biofuel and bio-energy, bioinformatics and metagenomics, environmental microbiology, enzyme technology, food

microbiology, industrial microbiology, IPR, medical microbiology and plant microbe interaction.

During the valedictory session, Prof. A. K. Koul, Vice Chancellor, NURSL, Ranchi emphasized about the 'Intellectual property rights in biotechnology era'. In the same session Prof. R. C. Sobti, Vice Chancellor, Punjab University, India discussed various avenues and recent advances in microbiological research and Mr. N. N. Pandey, IAS, Principal Secretary, Govt. of Jharkhand informed about policies of government in promotion of microbiology and biotechnology.

There were dialogue among microbiologists towards more participation, membership and it was felt that many interdisciplinary areas can also be included in the future AMI conferences. The 52nd Annual conference of AMI will be organized from November 3–6, 2011 by Punjab University, Chandigarh.

We anticipate further that more young microbiologists should step forward and contribute in AMI conferences in near future.