

Preface

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This special issue of *Applied Biochemistry and Biotechnology* is based on the papers presented in the International Conference on New Horizons in Biotechnology & VIII Convention of the Biotech Research Society, India (BRSI, www.brsi.in) organised by the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), jointly with BRSI on 21st to 24th November 2011 at Trivandrum, Kerala, India. The conference aimed to bring together eminent scientists, engineers, industry experts and researchers from across the world to deliberate on global developments in the fields of industrial biotechnology, medical biotechnology, environmental biotechnology & food and agriculture biotechnology.

New Horizons in Biotechnology (NHBT-2011) offered a stage for the researchers working in the various thrust areas of biotechnology to come together and deliberate on various important issues. The conference was participated and supported by various organisations of international importance such as International Forum on Industrial Bioprocesses, International Organization for Biotechnology and Bioengineering, Elsevier—UK, Thomson Reuters—USA, etc. and national organisations such as CSIR, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, Indian Council for Medical Research, State Committee on Science, Technology and Environment, Government of Kerala and State Bank of Travancore.

The conference discussed the cutting edge research areas in biotechnology and medicine across the world and eminent scientists and academicians delivered lectures on the most recent advances in the field. The conference provided a common platform for industry and academia to focus on various issues and to develop possible linkages among them. It also served the purpose of global networking among them and helped in creating a nucleus of interface research. This would lead to various collaborative research among different scientific group across the world/country and serve the society.

There were a total of about 575 participants, which included about 150 invitees and speakers and chairpersons. A total of 108 lectures were delivered in 30 parallel sessions and about 400 posters were presented in four poster sessions. There were about 110 overseas delegates, including about 70 invitees from USA, Canada, UK, Greece, Cyprus, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Slovakia, Russia, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Uganda, Nigeria, Mexico, Japan, Australia, Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

The scientific programme was divided into three parallel technical sessions focussing on different areas. There were two mini-symposia addressing the currently relevant topics of

biofuels and on probiotics and functional foods. Another major attraction of the event was the industry–young researcher interactive session. This session was specially for the young researchers who were encouraged to ask queries to eminent panellists from the industry, including CEOs of leading biotech companies in India and science managers from governmental agencies. This session offered an ideal stage for the young researchers to interact and share the experiences and needs of the industry. It aimed to motivate the young researchers to plan their careers in biotech industries and also think of developing themselves as entrepreneurs. NHBT-2011 was not only educative to all, but also bridged the gap between the scientific communities across the world and helped in developing collaboration and networking.

The current special issue contains the peer-reviewed articles from the expanding horizons of biotechnology. The issue has been broadly subdivided into nine parts, which are on biofuels and biorefineries, bioremediation and biodegradation, environmental processes, enzyme technology and protein engineering, human health, drugs and vaccine development, industrial bioprocesses and products, microbial ecology, phytochemicals and plant tissue culture and probiotics and food technology.

The guest editors thank all the authors for their contributions to this special issue and the reviewers for the efforts and comments. We are grateful to Prof. Ashok Mulchandani, Editor-in-Chief of the journal, for providing an opportunity to highlight the new findings in the horizons of biotechnology in this journal as a special issue. We are also thankful to Ms. Aironne Jeanne Rivera and Mr. Mark Bryan Balbas, Journal Editorial Office, and Mr. Allan Aling, Journals Production, for their help and efforts in bringing out this special issue of the journal.

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