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Speech Transcript

This is a forum for beauty with brains. Two people stand clear testimony to this statement, one of course is the Honorable Governor Martin O'Malley who is gracing the Women in Bio inauguration today with his esteemed presence and second, no prizes for guessing, I am standing right here in front of you!

A very good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Nidhi Saxena and I am the Founder and CEO of Karmic Lifesciences, India's fastest growing CRO and also the founding chair for the Inaugural year of the Women In Bio India Chapter.

Talking of beauty, time has proven that beauties have led several interesting innovations through the centuries, be it the beautiful Cleopatra who conducted the first ever clinical trial to compare the growth rate of fetus in male and female child or Madam Curie who was responsible for nothing less than the Atom Bomb or more recently the French Virologist Dr. Françoise Barre-Sinoussi who identified the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) as the cause of AIDS, for which she received the 2008 Nobel Prize.

The second important concept is that of entrepreneurship. The word entrepreneur although French bears remarkable closeness to a Hindi word "Antarprerna" which stands for inner motivation and drive,

And it is precisely this combination of innovation and inner motivation that Women in Bio seeks to fuel. To give you a background, Women-in-Bio was founded in 2001 in the Baltimore-Washington-Northern Virginia area with the primary aim of fostering women entrepreneurs and executives in building successful businesses in the biotechnology and life sciences industry.

Over the past ten years, WIB has experienced tremendous growth not only through its membership, but also through the launch of new chapters. WIB now has chapters in Research Triangle Park (RTP), Chicago, Seattle, Boston, and Washington, and of course, we are very very proud to launch WIB's first international chapter here in Mumbai today.

Among other things, WIB conducts professional development programs, workshops, and seminars; organizes networking opportunities with investors, attorneys, researchers and executives in fields and holds exciting social events. Other initiatives include the inspiring Young Women In Bio (YWIB) program and a new scholarship honoring WIB co-founder Robbie Melton.

Closer home, while the Indian women had political rights ahead of her Western counterpart, its translation into day to day life has been rather slow. Science has

definitely acted as a bridge and indeed a catalyst for women empowerment. We have the illustrious examples of Dr. Kiran Majumdar Shaw, Dr. Swati Piramal, Dr. Villoo Patel and several of you here who symbolize successful women in bio.

While these women entrepreneurs and scientists have made it big, there are several high potential women who are still struggling to follow their dreams. When I started Karmic Lifesciences, I had practically no support, no sources of funding and no sponsors and it was a rather long and uphill battle.

In this context, Women in Bio, India chapter seeks to provide the much needed support system. This is a forum that clearly seeks to be far beyond the kitty party circuit in that we want to make a real and visible impact.

Our objectives include:

1. Foster and promote the cause of women entrepreneurs and executives in lifesciences, in terms of providing access to information, resources and capital. Here we plan to actively interface with organizations such as DST, DBT, FICCI, CII, SIDBI etc. to help raise funds for exciting scientific endeavors, set up a business and technical review committee to evaluate and recommend business plans and handhold women entrepreneurs through the start-up process.
2. Support the cause of women in science and academics through providing access to research grants and academic scholarships.
3. Create a Women's Forum and Industry Voice to represent industry issues to Government & Regulatory bodies; as also Pharmaceutical and Biotech Associations which I believe is the need of the hour.
4. Recognize and honor Indian women who have excelled in lifesciences and made a remarkable contribution to promote the Indian lifesciences industry.

The initial response to our efforts has been more than encouraging. Its been only 4 weeks since we initiated the pre-launch activities and I am pleased to share that we have garnered 50+ memberships and generated an incredible level of interest, among not only women but also men who clearly have an important part to play.

We hope that the efforts of WIB India will see many more Women turning Scientists and Entrepreneurs and many more Women in Bio doing us proud. Proud to be a Woman in Bio!

Let me end with a couplet that beautifully epitomizes the spirit of Women Entrepreneurs today:

*Zindagi ki asli udaan abhi baki hai, kayi imtehaan abhi baki hai
Abhi to napi hai muthi bhar zami hamne, abhi to saara aasman baki hai!*