Indranil Sen – Managing Director, Ranbaxy (A Sun Pharma company), Malaysia



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Indranil Sen, managing director of Ranbaxy Malaysia, a Sun Pharma company, discusses the role of generics in the Malaysian pharmaceutical sector, and their strategy to lead the market, rather than becoming a "me too" generics company.

What have been your main goals that you have set out to achieve as the MD of Ranbaxy Malaysia?

When I took over as the head of Ranbaxy Malaysia in 2015, the main objective was to understand the intricacies of our operations. Since Ranbaxy had just merged with Sun Pharma globally, we did not have a broader understanding of the local operations. In addition, we needed to strategize on how to take the business forward, understand the local regulations and the changing healthcare scenarios. As a local manufacturer, this was critical in order to be well prepared for the future. Historically we have been able to collaborate with the government by supplying our quality medicines, gaining their confidence and giving reassurances that they can expect even better and more advanced products and services from us in the years to come. It was important for us to continue with this objective, as the public healthcare system is the dominant sector in Malaysia. Nonetheless, we have also increased our focus on the private sector, which, while small in Malaysia, is growing. This should put us in a strong position to brace for the future and ensure

sustainability of our operations. Moreover, now since we are a merged entity, we are focusing on building Sun Pharma’s corporate image. This is an ongoing exercise and a work in progress.

Malaysia is one of Sun Pharma’s leading markets among emerging countries. Can you evaluate your performance in the local market, and how do you position yourself?

Unlike many other generic companies, we are in a hybrid situation. We are a multi-national company and have the advantage of a larger global product pipeline, with a particular emphasis on chronic therapies, such as cardiology, psychiatry, neurology and oncology. We are in a strong position to extend these chronic therapies to meet the predicted future needs in some of the lifestyle segments. We have the advantage of possessing the technology and the ability to transfer it from the global technology platform to our local manufacturing unit in Malaysia.

One of the key challenges is to ensure that we keep focusing on supplying quality products to government tenders as well as the private sector. While we have the advantage of manufacturing the products at our local facility at Sungai Petani, we will have to constantly evolve in developing cost effective manufacturing processes, without compromising on product quality. Governments across the world are burdened with rising healthcare costs and Malaysia is no different. The challenge then is to maintain the quality of one’s product while keeping costs under control and also ensuring a strong and reliable supply chain. The latter is critical for any generics company.

What has been Ranbaxy’s strategy to stay ahead of the market?

While never compromising on quality, we have continually invested in our local manufacturing facility to improve upon the technological expertise of our products in Malaysia.

Our advantage is our global presence – in more than 65 countries, with 42 manufacturing plants worldwide, and a turnover of USD 4.1 billion. We invest in research & development and in constantly improving our technology. Our research centers are based out of India. These centers cater to our global footprint. Nonetheless, any subsidiary or operations have the access to products and technologies developed in these research centers, the manufacturing of which are monitored by stringent global quality management systems. We endeavor to make this known to every stakeholder across stages of the value chain in Malaysia, so that they have absolute confidence in our products. I believe this gives us a niche within the generics market.

We have a long-term vision and a commitment to the Malaysian market. We have been here for over 35 years and are here to stay.

How necessary is a strong generic market for the sustainability of the Malaysian system?

I believe that generics are the way forward, not only in Malaysia, but across the world. Even if you take developed markets such as the USA or the UK/EU, governments are realizing that generics are the key to managing healthcare costs. The only concern is the reputation of the manufacturers and their ability to offer sustainable quality products.

As a multinational company with a strong presence globally, we have a role to play in shaping the industry, especially given our focus on quality and lean manufacturing processes, which will be the key factors for the future of the generics industry.

The new government is considering new reform to maximize the quality of provision to patients, while ensuring sustainability. What reforms would you like to see in the future?

Since the Malaysian healthcare system is one of the robust systems in this part of the world, one of the major challenges faced by both industry and the government, is striking a balance between public and private healthcare services. The fabric of public healthcare system is quite stretched, while the private healthcare is now evolving. A public-private partnership by which the government can coordinate with the private sector could ease the burden on the government. The systems are in place and are delivering, but with better coordination between the two tiers, we could further improve both the sustainability, and the quality of healthcare provided in Malaysia.

What do you see as an area of potential growth for Ranbaxy in Malaysia?

We are focusing our research on creating quality products, in various segments. If we look at the future of the industry, it will require a lot of niche products to meet the needs of changing disease patterns.

Moreover, due to the current epidemiological changes in Malaysia, there will be a need to shift towards combatting lifestyle diseases. Given the growth in non-communicable diseases, and the incidence of cardio-vascular diseases, the market has significant potential in the future.

What is your top priority for the next three years?

My main priority is of course to grow the business and concentrate on generating sustainable revenues. As a company we are focused on building long term business opportunities. Our focus will also be to increase our resources into the Malaysia market. Enhancing quality and creating an efficient distribution system, is a work in progress.

I am personally motivated by the changing dynamics of the industry. This requires that you stay up to date in order not to be left behind. While this can be challenging, it ensures that every day of work is stimulating and rewarding. A decade ago, the dynamics of the industry were completely different and have shifted 180 degrees today. I’m sure in the next decade or so there will be another paradigm shift. Hence as an industry we need to keep challenging ourselves.

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