

## Avesthagen founder receives top French award

Viloo Morawala Patell, founder-chairperson of India's leading life sciences firm Avesthagen Ltd, was late Wednesday honoured with a top civilian award by the French government for her entrepreneurship and significant contribution in the scientific field.

The Officier de L'Ordre National du Merite' (Officer of the National Order of Merit) award was presented to Patell by French ambassador to India Jerome Bonnafont at a felicitation ceremony here.

The award, founded by then French president Charles de Gaulle in 1963, is an Order of Chivalry. It was conferred on Patell by President Nicolas Sarkozy in recognition of her achievements in life sciences and business.

According to the citation, the award acknowledges Patell as a prominent figure in the scientific field and a great entrepreneur, who founded Avesthagen in India in 1988.

'This award is also a tribute to your cooperation with French scientists, your fruitful partnerships with major French industrial firms and your affection to our country,' the citation said in honour of Patell.

The 52-year-old Patell did her doctorate from University Louis Pasteur, Strasbourg, in France after her post-graduation from Bombay University and graduation from Osmania University in Hyderabad.

Accepting the award, Patell said the honour was a moment of great pride for her and recognition of India's achievements in science and innovation.

'It's an award for the entire industry. India has arrived on the scientific map of the world and has emerged as an intellectual powerhouse to reckon with,' Patell noted.

As a scientist-businesswoman, Patell founded Avesthagen to promote a sustainable innovation platform and facilitate the convergence of food, pharma and population genetics across the life-science space. French firms such as Danone, bioMerieux and Limagrain and Indian firms like Cipla and Godrej are some of its major partners.

Patell is also a key member of the task force and vision group for biotechnology set up by the Karnataka government and founding member of the Association of Biotechnology-led Enterprises (ABLE).

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