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Amid Talk Of KKR Stake Sale, JB CEO Stresses Business As Usual

Red Sea Crisis Could Become Industry Headwind

by **Vibha Ravi**

In an interview with JB CEO Nikhil Chopra, *Scrip* discusses talk of a stake sale by private equity fund KKR, gains from acquisitions including select Novartis brands, plans to ascend to the top five in cardiology and a ramp up of the CDMO business, which has clients including J&J.

[JB Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd.](#), now rebranded as just JB, and its CEO, Nikhil Chopra, often mention "fastest-growing" in their communications.

Arguably, taking a company's ranking up about 10 notches over a span of three years could be termed an achievement.

During an audio/podcast interview with *Scrip*, Chopra is clear-headed and focused on further growth, an attitude that allows him to sweep aside talk of US private equity (PE) firm KKR planning to sell part or the entirety of its stake in JB.

KKR had acquired about a 54% stake in JB from the founders, the Mody family, and there have been media reports of stake sale discussions with Indian pharma majors, including [Torrent Pharmaceuticals Ltd.](#), [Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd.](#) and [Mankind Pharma Ltd.](#)

A wide range of issues including acquisitions, increased use of tech and artificial intelligence (AI) in the company, possible headwinds from the Red Sea crisis in the Middle East and what India could do to jump-start innovation are also discussed during the interview.

Less than six months earlier, in late December 2023, JB acquired from [Novartis AG](#) a portfolio of about 15 ophthalmology drugs, including products to combat infections, allergies and glaucoma. The deal is effective January 2027, until which time JB will have exclusive licensing rights to the portfolio in India.

Besides, acquisitions of select probiotic and reproductive health assets from India's Sanzyme and cardiac franchise Razel (rosuvastatin and combinations) from [Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Limited](#) have been overseen by Chopra, who was CEO-India Business for [Cipla Limited](#) before his current position.

A three-pronged strategy for the contract development and manufacturing (CDMO) business and a move to improve the company's environmental, social and governance (ESG) ratings, also come up during the discussion.

His sights now set on a top five ranking in cardiology in India and an entry of the CDMO business into the US and Europe, the CEO admits the journey ahead is not easy, but he is counting on a leadership style that has served him well both at JB and over more than two decades at Cipla.

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