

Of patents and patients

PHARMACEUTICAL giant Cipla's archive is worth emulating for all legacy companies. This diarist toured it last week and was surprised to see the effort gone into chronicling the company's eight-decade-long journey. A visitors' book from 1939, signed by both Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel; a 1939 photograph of a Cipla-monogrammed van, against the Great Pyramid of Giza; a photograph from August 15, 1947, with founder Khwaja Abdul Hamied and Dr Yusuf Khwaja Hamied, current non-executive chairman, as a child, celebrating with the staff. There are also letters, telegrams, brochures, photographs of the labs, catalogues, tins that contained Calcima ACD (calcium tablets), an inhaler from 1993, and paraphernalia from Dr Yusuf's world-famous HIV/AIDS offer of providing medicines for less than a dollar a day in 2001: all of these have been pieced together from different sources. MK Hamied, non-executive vice-chairman and Dr Yusuf's brother, tells us, "A few years



Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in 1939

ago, several factors such as the generational change in promoter leadership, new emerging business trends, the changing Indian and international pharmaceutical scenarios, etc, prompted introspection. The general desire in the promoter family was to ensure that Cipla's rich legacy was not lost. Cipla's story is in many ways the story of Indian pharma. Work on building the Cipla Archives repository and accumulating material, starting with oral histories, commenced in 2015." Samina Vaziralli, executive vice-chairperson and MK's daughter, says, "For me, as a third-generation Ciplaite, the Cipla Archives is the custodian and record-keeper of the rich past, present and future of Cipla. It serves as a daily reminder of the might of our legacy and the need to watch against resting on past laurels, and as motivation to keep moving onwards and upwards. In the current business atmosphere, I believe corporate archives provide that extra competitive edge. [They] demonstrate pride in the company's legacy, but also prove that we treat our legacy with the seriousness and sense of responsibility it deserves."



Cipla founder Khwaja Abdul Hamied with son, Dr Yusuf Khwaja Hamied.

PICS/BIPIN KOKATE