

PREFACE

Microbiologists from Asian countries, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam have involved themselves in projects under the Asian Network on Microbial Research since 1995. This is a research project initiated by the Science and Technology Agency of Japan for Asian microbiologists to discover and study the richness of diversity of microbial species in exotic and pristine locations in Asian countries.

The results of this endeavour after five years of research showed that numerous species of microorganisms were isolated and some of these were described for the first time. The exciting findings augur well for microbiologists and promise significant impact for further activities by taxonomists, microbiologists, physiologists, geneticists, cell biologists and biochemists.

Organic molecules that possess specificities for biological activities for particular targets associated with essential and normal necessary functions of organisms continue to be uncovered in nature. Enzymes of diverse microorganisms are also examined for their abilities to degrade complex and hazardous organic compounds which are present in our environment. Microorganisms have long been associated with Asian fermented foods where they play roles in enhancing their flavour and preserving their quality.

There is a continuing need to isolate, characterise and classify the microorganisms encountered in locations in Asian countries. Microorganisms are a heritage not to be considered lightly at any time. Studies of the microorganisms contribute to advance our understanding of the intricacies of the activities of the organelles of the cells of these organisms and these are of significant benefit to basic studies in life sciences in general. Microorganisms are constantly used in commercial applications to produce compounds that enhance the quality of our life.

This is the first publication on the diversity of microorganisms in Asia. We are indebted to our authors who have assisted in the task of bringing out this volume by their important and valuable contributions.

Our aim is to have the investigators in microbiology at large informed of some of the research activities of the microbiologists in Asia. This publication should act as a reference material for researchers in academia and in commercial organisations. It is

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also our intention that the book may be instrumental in encouraging young microbiologists to dwell deeper into the exciting research topics described in the papers herein.

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