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New £8 million COVID-19 fund spurs UK-India collaboration

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the [Department of Biotechnology \(DBT\)](#), Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India are launching a joint funding initiative to support collaborative research focused on understanding the severity of COVID-19 in South Asian populations in India and the UK.

Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic, DBT and UKRI have made significant rapid investment in COVID-19 research. Building on this strong base, through the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) UKRI is investing £4 million to support the UK component, with matched equivalent resource provided by DBT in support of the Indian components.

This joint funding opportunity will support new research projects that are trying to understand, the pandemic through the study of related ethnic groups in different environments in both countries.

Successful projects will focus on:

- **Mechanistic studies of the disease and its sequelae**
- **Virology, Immunity and Pathophysiology**
- **Epidemiology and behavioural science**

Dame Ottoline Leyser, Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation said:

“In the UK, emerging evidence shows that, after taking account of age and other sociodemographic factors, people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are nearly twice as likely to die of COVID-19 as white people. There is an urgent need for more data on why COVID-19 disproportionately impacts people from minority ethnic backgrounds in the UK and around the world.

Through the UKRI-DBT Covid-19 Partnership Initiative we hope to support collaborative UK-India research teams to investigate exactly that. We hope the findings from this new programme will help to mitigate the severity of COVID-19 in the UK and India.”

Dr Renu Swarup, Secretary of India’s Department of Biotechnology said:

This joint programme builds on the strong foundation of India-UK research collaboration and is an opportunity to bring together our collective expertise to understand the severity of COVID-19 infection in South Asian populations of both India and the UK.

This pandemic has brought together scientific research groups nationally and globally to address key research questions. Faced with one of the biggest challenges of our time, research from this DBT-UKRI collaboration will be important in understanding the differential response among these two populations. Improved understanding in this regard will empower us in planning more effective interventions to fight COVID-19 pandemic and any such events in future.

For more information on the funding, visit the call page [here](#)

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About DBT:

The department has made significant achievements in the growth and application of biotechnology in the broad areas of agriculture, health care, animal sciences, environment, and industry.

The Department of Biotechnology, under the Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India is the focal agency for biotechnology education, training, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in India. DBT has laid emphasis on promotion of excellence and innovation for discovery, early and late stage translational research in the areas of agriculture, affordable healthcare & medical technology, food & nutritional security, animal biotechnology, environmental safety, clean energy & bio-fuel, bio-manufacturing, etc.

Building capacity in cutting edge areas of research, developing right kind of infrastructure, development of products and their commercialization for a robust bio economy and establishment of India as a world-class bio-manufacturing hub for developing and developed markets are the major thrust of the Department.

About UKRI:

UK Research and Innovation works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish.

We aim to maximise the contribution of each of our component organisations, working individually and collectively. We work with our many partners to connect discovery to prosperity and public good, through fostering a research and innovation system to which everyone can contribute and from which everyone benefits

Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined budget of more than £8 billion, UK Research and Innovation brings together the seven research councils, Innovate UK and Research England

About UKRI India:

UK Research and Innovation India, based at the British High Commission in New Delhi, plays a key role in enhancing the UK-India relationship in research and innovation.

Since 2008, when the office was established, the UK together with the government of India and third parties have together invested over £300 million in co-funded research and innovation programmes comprising over 250 individual projects, involving over 175 different UK and Indian research institutions and more than 100 industry partners.

UKRI – India collaborative projects cover an array of themes, including, energy, environment, food security, health, next generation IT networks, social sciences, and humanities.