

Government of India
Ministry of Science and Technology
Department of Biotechnology

Monthly Cabinet Summary, April -2021

I. Important policy decisions taken and major achievements during the month:

(i) Guidelines for sustaining DBT- Bio-Banks and Cohorts

The guidelines for sustaining DBT- Bio-Banks and Cohorts have been approved. The document has been developed to provide guidance on sustaining existing biobanks/repositories, and cohorts/demographic sites in India. This document also outlines key considerations for programs intending to provide sustainability support to existing bio-banks, cohorts and demographic sites, with special reference to those established as part of Department of Biotechnology funded research projects.

(ii) Measures taken by DBT to address COVID-19

a. Mission COVID Suraksha – The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission

Under “Mission COVID Suraksha – The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission” being implemented by BIRAC, a PSU of DBT, 5 proposals for candidate vaccine development, 4 proposals for capacity enhancement and 19 proposals for strengthening clinical trial sites, have been shortlisted for support.

b. Partnerships for Accelerating Clinical Trials (PACT) initiative

DBT through BIRAC and CDSA has initiated the Partnerships for Accelerating Clinical Trials (PACT) and is working closely to strengthen capacities for facilitating phase III clinical trials of COVID vaccines in friendly nations in association with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Under the 2nd series of the training program, the third module on Good Clinical Laboratory Practice (GCLP), concluded on April 9, 2021, with nearly 280 participants from Bahrain, Bhutan, Gambia, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, and Vietnam, across both the sessions.

c. National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI)

The Department participated in the Meeting of the Standing Technical Sub-Committee (STSC) of NTAGI, held on 06th April, 2021 to discuss research and capacity building issues around vaccines and update on COVID-19 vaccine safety. The Department duly participated in the 18th COVID-19 Working Group Meeting of the NTAGI on 13th April, 2021, for discussion on contraindications to COVID-19 vaccines; Vaccination of lactating mothers; Definition of re-Infection of COVID-19; Quarantine of vaccinated COVID positive individuals.

d. Department coordinated a Meeting of Hon’ble Prime Minister with the Indian Vaccine Manufacturers on 20th April 2021 to review the status of vaccine production capacities in India.

e. Testing/Diagnostics

The City /Regional clusters have been established in a Hub and Spoke model to scale-up testing of COVID-19 samples in government institutions across the

country. The Hubs are Government laboratories approved by respective Ministries /Departments (DBT, DST, CSIR, DAE, DRDO, ICAR etc) as per ICMR guidelines. So far 21 City /Regional clusters have been established and over 38.92 lakh samples have been tested. National Institute of Immunology has registered with ICMR for Covid testing

To further enable testing access to rural India, the I-lab (infectious disease lab)-mobile lab for Covid testing launched by Hon'ble Minister on 18th Jun, 2020 has performed about 17858 tests in the Faridabad region. DBT has provided manpower support to all the hubs to continue testing.

(iii) BioSafety

a. The Department reviewed 42 applications in 203rd, 17 applications in 204th and 35 applications in 205th meetings of Review Committee of Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) on 01st, 15th and 29th April 2021, respectively. These applications include Import/Export/Transfer/Receive, information items and Pre-clinical toxicity studies for Biopharma, and Import/Export/Transfer/Receive and Event selection Trial for Agriculture. After deliberation on each application, appropriate decision was taken by the RCGM.

b. During the month, 13 Institutional Biosafety Committees were constituted on IBKP portal.

(iv) Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Cases: The comments of the Department were communicated to DGFT on 08 applications seeking permission for import of restricted items.

(v) A “**DBT-ICAR Meeting on Gene Editing in Plants**” involving Secretary, DARE & DG, ICAR, Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra and Secretary DBT, Dr. Renu Swarup, was held on 15th April, 2021 to discuss the use of Gene Editing in crop plants. Discussion meeting focused on the need to create an enabling environment for undertaking research based on new tools of genome editing.

(vi) Secretary, DBT laid the foundation stone for **Dr Gurdev Singh Khush Institute of Genetics, Plant Breeding & Biotechnology** at PAU Ludhiana being set up to honor the sterling contribution of Prof. G. S. Khush to the field of Agriculture biotechnology.

(vii) New projects funded based on RFP in any specific area

a. BIOTECH URJIT (University Research Joint Industry Translational) CLUSTER

The Department has received 14 full length proposals against the call “Biotech URJIT (University Research Joint Industry Translational Cluster) Cluster”. A preliminary National Biotech URJIT Cluster Steering Committee meeting was held on 28th April to chalk out the framework for evaluation of proposals submitted.

b. Scientific Utilization through Research Augmentation-Prime Products from Indigenous Cows (SUTRA-PIC)

The Technical Expert Group (ITEG) Meeting of SUTRA-PIC program for the thematic area “Scientific research on Prime-products from indigenous cows-based utility items” was held on 29th April 2021. DBT have 23 shortlisted proposals which were reviewed for funding support.

(viii) Societal outreach of DBT

a. DBT along with partnering Institutes of Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG) organized a Webinar on “Genome Sequencing of SARS-CoV-19” on 23rd April 2021.

b. FIRST Hub: Facilitation of Innovation and Regulations for Start-Ups And Innovators

FIRST HUB is a facilitation unit set up by DBT at BIRAC to address the queries of Innovators. With regards to prevailing situation around globe, FIRST HUB sessions are being held every alternate Friday during a month to solve the queries of innovators. For the month of April, FIRST HUB session was conducted on 9th and 23rd April 2021 and clarified 10 queries. Representatives from CDSCO, ICMR, NIB, GeM, KIHT, BIS, DBT and BIRAC were available to take queries on Regulatory Pathways, Funding Opportunities, Public Procurement, IVD testing and validation, Standards and Specifications, Manufacturing and testing infrastructure support.

c. The 15th and 16th Webinars in the series of IBSC awareness programme for IBSC Member Secretaries and researchers was hosted through Video Conferencing on 8th and 22nd April 2021, respectively.

(ix) International Cooperation

a. The Department participated in the 1st meeting of the Quad Vaccine Experts Group on 19th April, 2021, to discuss the Terms of Reference of the group; Indo-Pacific assistance and support; update on vaccine manufacturing expansion.

b. Half-time Review meeting of the Indo-Swedish Joint Commission for Economic and Scientific Cooperation (JCEC) was held on 16.04.2021 to review action taken on the protocol of the 19th Session of Indo-Swedish JCEC.

(x) Publications & Patents

There have been **78** research publications and 4 patents filed/granted by the Autonomous Institutes of the Department.

(xi) Technology developed/Commercialized through R&D projects supported by DBT as well as AIs of DBT: 2

DBT-THSTI has developed Integrative Expression Vector ‘pBD66N’ (“Vector”) and associated know-how, covered in Indian patent Application number 201911046890, which can be used as such as a genetic tool for therapeutic development and basic research (“Products”). The technology has been transferred to M/s Bioheaven 360 Genotec Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

II. Compliance Report on Important Matters/Issues

(i) Important policy matters held up on account of prolonged inter-ministerial consultations: N/A

(ii) Compliance of Cabinet/Cabinet Committee decisions: N/A

No. of COS decisions pending for compliance	Proposed action plan/timelines for compliance of COS decisions	Remarks
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(iii) No. of cases of ‘sanction for prosecution’ pending for more than three months: Nil

(iv) **Particulars of cases in which there has been a departure from the Transaction of Business: Nil**

(v) **Status of implementation of e-governance:**

Total No. of active files: 13082	Total No. of e-files generated during April, 2021: 145
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(vi) **Status of Public Grievances:**

No. of Public Grievances redressed during month: 23	No. of Public Grievances pending at the end of the month: 27
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(vii) **Information on the specific steps taken by the Ministry/ Department for utilization of the Space, Technology based tools and application in Governance and Development: Nil**

(viii) **a. Confirmation that the incumbency details of all posts in the Ministry/Department and its organizations falling under the purview of the ACC have been updated on AVMS:** It is confirmed that the incumbency details of all the posts in the Ministry/Department (both Autonomous institutes and PSUs under DBT) falling under the purview of the ACC have been updated on AVMS (copy enclosed).

b. Status regarding compliance of the directions of ACC. A paragraph on Cases in which the ACC directions have not been compiled with distinct heading: It is confirmed that the directions of ACC are complied with.

c. Status of cases where recommendations from PESB have been received but the proposals are yet to be submitted to the ACC Secretariat: It is stated that the same may be treated as 'Nil'.

(ix) **Status of Government e- Marketplace (GeM):**

Procurement made by the department through GeM for the month of April, 2021 is Rs. 2,38,856/-.