

Government of India
Ministry of Science and Technology
Department of Biotechnology

Monthly Cabinet Summary, March -2021

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

(i) Global Bio-India 2021

Department of Biotechnology (DBT) along with its Public Sector Undertaking, Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) organized the 2nd edition of Global Bio-India, – Global Bio-India 2021 from 1st -3rd March 2021 on a Digital platform. The event with around 30 sessions witnessed **8400+ delegates, 40+ countries, 50+ international speakers, 1000+ Entrepreneurs & start-ups, 140+ investor-start-up meetings, 150+ exhibitors, 350+ bio partnering meetings**. The **National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2021-25** also released during the event

(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, 4 projects for candidate vaccine development, 3 proposals for capacity enhancement and 15 projects for strengthening clinical trial sites, have been shortlisted for further processing.

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, 3 sessions on ‘Ethical Considerations in Clinical Research’ have been held in March with participation from more than 160 attendees from Bahrain, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, USA and Vietnam.

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 17th March 2021 to discuss revision in dose interval of Covishield vaccine and generation of Indian data.

d. ACT Accelerator (ACT-A) Facilitation Council

Secretary DBT participated in the 5th ACT-A Facilitation Council Meeting held on 23rd March, 2021 and discussed the challenges in the scale-up and access to COVID-19 diagnostic tests and therapeutic approaches; increasing the supply of COVID-19 vaccines to COVAX facility.

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 34.35 lakh samples have been tested. 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 17142 tests in the Faridabad region. DBT has provided manpower support to all the hubs to continue testing.

(iii) BioSafety

- a. The Department reviewed 38 applications in 201st and 27 applications in 202th meetings of Review Committee of Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) on 04th and 18th March 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, 29 Institutional Biosafety Committees were constituted on IBKP portal.
- c. The 1st meeting of the Sub-Group to prepare a detailed document on establishment of National Biosafety and Biosecurity Network was held on 15.03.2021
- d. During the 3rd meeting of the Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee organized on 23rd March, 2021, Regulatory landscape of Cell and Gene Therapy was discussed.

(iv) Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Cases: The comments of the Department were communicated to DGFT on 02 applications seeking permission for import of restricted items.

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

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

Department has invited proposals to create Biotechnology URJIT (University Research Joint Industry Translational) Cluster in the country. Out of the 19 LoIs, a total of 14 full length proposals have been received against the call. More than 100 investigators participated in the virtual pre-proposal discussion meeting organized by the division on 1st March 2021 to address queries raised by the PIs.

(vi) Societal outreach of DBT

a. DBT participated in the World TB day Webinar on 24th March 2021 organized by RePORT (Regional Prospective Observational Research in Tuberculosis) India.

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 March, FIRST HUB session was conducted on 2nd March during Global Bio-India 2021 and 19th March 2021 and over 18 queries clarified. 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 13th and 14th Webinars in the series of IBSC awareness programme for IBSC Member Secretaries and researchers was hosted through Video Conferencing on 11th and 25th March 2021, respectively.

(vii) International Cooperation

- a. Department participated in the Quad Leaders' Summit held on March 12, 2021 to explore opportunities for coordination in facilitating access for countries in the Indo-Pacific to COVID-19 vaccines, including through frameworks/mechanisms such as the COVAX facility and to build longer term global health security..

b. Mission Innovation India

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) is the nodal agency supporting & coordinating Clean energy national efforts via Mission Innovation (MI) India Unit. The Mission Innovation Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee Meeting was held virtually on 18th March 2021 and was chaired by Secretary, DBT, senior officials from DST and line Ministries (MoPNG, MNRE, MoCA, MoPS&W, MoP, BEE, CSIR-IIP) participated in the meeting. An update was provided on Mission Innovation India Activities Framework & proposed Missions under Phase 2.0.

- c. A follow-up meeting with DEFRA, UK was held on 16th March, 2021 to explore the potential of an agreement on an India-UK Zoonotic Research Twinning Initiative.
- d. The expert committee meeting was held on 19th March, 2021 through video conferencing to discuss and shortlist EU-India joint research and innovation proposals received under "European Green Deal call of Horizon 2020 Work Programme".
- e. The 2nd meeting of Joint Working Group (JWG) of India EU Water Partnership (IEWP) was held on 24th March, 2021 through virtual platform to develop the Flexible Action Plan for the India-EU Water Partnership's Phase 2.
- f. The India-Sweden Dialogue on 'Precision Medicine and Data-Driven Life Sciences' was organized on 2nd March, 2021 through virtual mode during the Global Bio-India Event.

(viii) Publications & Patents

There have been 77 research publications and 4 patents filed/granted by the Autonomous Institutes of the Department.

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

- a. DBT-NII has developed a method of treatment for osteoarthritis using collagen-based herbal formulation. The developed formulation has shown no toxicity in rodents and alleviated the conditions associated with Mono-sodium IodoAcetate(MIA) and carrageen an induced pain and inflammation in osteoarthritis animal models. This technology (developed formulation) is transferred to Purobien Lifesciences Pvt Ltd for further development and commercialization.
- b. A license agreement for a stable clone (CHO-HIRc-mycGLUT4eGFP) generated at NCCS was signed with Applied Biological Materials, Inc., Canada, on 22nd March 2021.

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: 13021	Total No. of e-files generated during January, 2021: 445
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(vi) **Status of Public Grievances:**

No. of Public Grievances redressed during month: 21	No. of Public Grievances pending at the end of the month: 14
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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.

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 March, 2021 is Rs. 32,72,991/-.