

Government of India
Ministry of Science and Technology
Department of Biotechnology

Monthly Cabinet Summary, May -2021

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

(i) 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, 5 proposals for capacity enhancement and 19 proposals for strengthening clinical trial sites, have been shortlisted for support. Also, capacity enhancement of 3 PSUs, viz., Indian Immunologicals, Haffkine Biopharmaceuticals and Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Corporation Limited (BIBCOL), is being supported under Mission COVID Suraksha, in an effort to ramp-up Covaxin production. This support will enhance the production capacities, which is expected to reach more than 10 crore doses per month by September, 2021.

b. National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI)

The Department participated in the 22nd and 23rd COVID-19 Working Group Meetings of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) on 10th and 20th May, 2021, respectively to deliberate on issues pertaining to interval between two doses of Covishield vaccine; vaccination in pregnant and lactating women; rapid antigen testing prior to covid vaccination and programmatic implementation of the Russian Vaccine, Sputnik V.

c. The Department organized and duly participated in the meeting entitled “Consultation on Opportunities for SARS-CoV-2 Research Collaboration” with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and select experts, on May 19, 2021, under the umbrella of the Indo-US Vaccine Action Programme (VAP), to discuss important areas of cooperation, in light of the emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants and their impact on vaccine development and immune responses.

A virtual EU-India information session on SARS-COV-2 Genomic Sequencing efforts was held on 13th May 2021. The meeting was facilitated by the DBT and European Union to India, and attended by the representatives of the Indian SARS-COV-2 Genome Consortium (INSACOG) and European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC). The objective of the meeting was to have a preliminary discussion on the possibility of bilateral cooperation and understanding assessment methods.

d. The Department duly participated in the first meeting of Sub-group on Vaccine Delivery, Harmonization and Administration (and Science & Tech) on 19th May, 2021 to discuss the issues pertaining to sources of financing, for procurement and distribution & possible Quad mechanism for emergency vaccine supply in crisis situations.

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 46.01 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 19530 tests in the Faridabad region. DBT has provided manpower support to all the hubs to continue testing.

- f. DBT-AMTZ National COMManD Consortium [COVID MedTech Manufacturing Development] is a national manufacturing facility established to address the shortage of critical medical equipment in India and move progressively towards a stage of self-sufficiency. AMTZ has been able to achieve production of 575 lakh tests of RT-PCR as on date (>10 Lakh diagnostic kits/day), 3.5 lakh Covid-ELISA tests, 11 lakh Viral Transport Media kits, 3000 IR thermometers, 2000 Pulse oximeters along with 4950 ventilators and other critical medical devices.

(ii) BioSafety

- a. The Department reviewed 35 applications in 206th and 22 applications in 207th meetings of Review Committee of Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) on 13th and 27th May 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, 7 Institutional Biosafety Committees were constituted on IBKP portal.

- (iii) Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Cases:** The comments of the Department were communicated to DGFT on 14 applications seeking permission for export of SCOMET (Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies) items.

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

- a. **BIOTECH URJIT (University Research Joint Industry Translational) CLUSTER**
1st National Biotech URJIT Cluster Steering Committee meeting was held on 18th May 2021 to shortlist proposals submitted against the " Establishment of Biotech URJIT Cluster" Call. Out of 14 full length proposals, 7 proposals have been shortlisted for the next round of selection process.

(v) Societal outreach of DBT

a. Science Setu:

“Science Setu” programme launched by DBT in the year 2014 provides ample scope for the scientists in our Autonomous Institutions (AIs) to take up systematic teaching commitments at the undergraduate level. Under this “Science Setu” initiative,

Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (IBSD), National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS), Regional Centre of Biotechnology (RCB) and Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) conducted webinars/open day events during the month of May 2021.

b. Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, India @75

The Department has been actively celebrating the "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" through various events being organized in various parts of the country on the basis of Jan Bhagidari. During the month, the department organized 16 "Science Setu" events through its autonomous research institutes facilitating the engagement and interaction between researchers and college students.

The BioNest incubators supported by BIRAC, organized four roadshows on themes such as showcasing the impact of BioNest incubators in East and North-East Region, MedTech opportunities in India, and women entrepreneurs in agriculture, etc.

A farmer's meeting was also organized at Village, Niyaw, Distt. Siddharthnagar, U.P for "Promotion of High Yield Dwarf Kalanamak Variety of Paddy with Innovative Technology".

c. 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 May, FIRST HUB session was conducted on 21st May 2021 and clarified 6 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.

d. The 6th and 7th Webinars in the series of IBSC awareness programme for researchers was hosted through Video Conferencing on 6th and 20th May 2021, respectively.

(vi) International Cooperation

a. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) in association with CNRS, France conducted a virtual workshop on 19th May 2021. Based on the mutual interest, Scientists/researchers from both the organizations participated in the event and discussed on the priority areas focusing Host pathogen interaction and Marine Biology & Biotechnology.

(vii) Publications & Patents

There have been **74** research publications and **7** patents filed/granted by the Autonomous Institutes of the Department.

(viii) SAHAJ: Usage and Revenue

The Department of Biotechnology launched 'Scientific Infrastructure Access for Harnessing Academia University Research Joint Collaboration, (SAHAJ)' portal, where in DBT-Autonomous Institutes and DBT supported Infrastructure programmes provide and share its equipment and infrastructure to Research Institutes, Universities, Colleges and Start -ups / Entrepreneurs. During the month, 888 users availed the services at DBT-AIs and a total of Rs. 2,29,50,465/- revenue was generated.

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

The department has apprised the Empowered Group on Medical Infrastructure and COVID Management Plan (EG-I) about the healthcare products developed by various biotech start-ups. DBT-BIRAC has supported the start-ups which have products categorized into Therapeutic devices, Assistive/Monitoring devices, Medical instrumentation/equipment and In-vitro diagnostics.

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: 13,223	Total No. of e-files generated during May, 2021: 127
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(vi) Status of Public Grievances:

No. of Public Grievances redressed during month: 77	No. of Public Grievances pending at the end of the month: 26
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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):

No procurement was made through GeM for the month of May, 2021.