

Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)

January 6, 2021

In news

Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) gave its approval to Zydus Cadila , Ahmedabad based drug firm, to initiate Phase III clinical trials of its Covid-19 vaccine ZyCoV-D. The candidate of the drug has been supported by the National Biopharma Mission (NBM) under the aegis of the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)

Key updates about Zydus Cadila

- According to the Ministry of Science and Technology, it is the country's first indigenously developed DNA vaccine candidate against COVID-19
- The Ministry also said that the candidate has been supported by the National Biopharma Mission (NBM) under the aegis of Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) and the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.

About National Biopharma Mission (NBM)

- The National Biopharma Mission (NBM) is an industry-Academia Collaborative Mission for accelerating biopharmaceutical development in the country.
- Under this Mission the Government has launched Innovate in India (i3) programme to create an enabling ecosystem to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the sector.
- The mission will be implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).

- The mission was approved in 2017 at a total cost of Rs 1500 crore and is 50% co-funded by World Bank loan. It is managed through a dedicated Program Management Unit (PMU) at BIRAC.
- Together with National and International experts, the most promising projects are selected in response to open Request for Applications issued by the PMU.

About Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)

- BIRAC is a not-for-profit Section 8, Schedule B, Public Sector Enterprise, **set up by Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**, Government of India
- It was set up as an Interface Agency to strengthen and empower the emerging Biotech enterprise to undertake strategic research and innovation, addressing nationally relevant product development needs.
- BIRAC is a industry-academia interface and implements its mandate through a wide range of impact initiatives, be it providing access to risk capital through targeted funding, technology transfer, Intellectual Property management and handholding schemes that help bring innovation excellence to the biotech firms and make them globally competitive.

Vision

“To Stimulate, foster and enhance the strategic research and innovation capabilities of the Indian biotech industry, particularly start-ups and SME’s, for creation of affordable products addressing the needs of the largest section of society”

Key Strategies of BIRAC

- Foster innovation and entrepreneurship
- Promote affordable innovation in key social sectors
- Empowerment of start-ups & small and medium enterprises

- Contribute through partners for capability enhancement and diffusion of innovation
- Enable commercialization of discovery
- Ensure global competitiveness of Indian enterprises

Various programmes of BIRAC

Bioincubators Nurturing Entrepreneurship for Scaling Technologies (Bio-NEST):

It was launched by BIRAC with a vision that focused on fostering the biotech innovation ecosystem in the country. Bio-NEST program provides support to establish bio-incubators either as a standalone entity or as a part of academia.

Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme (BIG):

It is the flagship programme of BIRAC, which provides the right admixture of fuel and support to young startups and entrepreneurial individuals. BIG is the largest early stage biotech funding programme in India.

Students Innovations for Translation & Advancement of Research Explorations (SITARE):

It is aimed at supporting innovative student projects in the area of biotechnology. The scheme's mandate is to promote and encourage young students for embracing translational research to develop innovative products and technologies addressing unmet needs.

The scheme has two components:

- SITARE-Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Award Grant (SITARE-GYTI): 15 innovative student projects will receive funding support of upto INR 15 lakhs each. SITARE-GYTI encourages postgraduate and doctoral students to undertake projects with commercial potential leading to creation of biotech startups.
- SITARE-Appreciation Grant: Residential workshops called

as Biotech Innovation Ignition School (BIIS) for undergraduate students are organized to provide hands-on-technical training and mentorship for problem identification in 3-4 weeks duration. Out of 30-40 students per workshop, 10 students are selected and provided a grant support of up to INR 1 lakh each to encourage their inquisitiveness and sustained efforts.

Encouraging Youth for Undertaking Innovative Research through Vibrant Acceleration (E-YUVA):

- It aims to promote a culture of applied research and need-oriented (societal or industry) entrepreneurial innovation among young students and researchers.
- The scheme is implemented through E-YUVA Centres (EYCs) to inculcate entrepreneurial culture through fellowship, pre-incubation and mentoring support

Biotechnology Industry Partnership Programme (BIPP):

It is a government partnership with Industries for support on a cost sharing basis for path-breaking research in frontier futuristic technology areas having major economic potential and making the Indian industry globally competitive.

Small Business Innovation Research Initiative (SBIRI):

SBIRI scheme of the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology was launched in 2005 to boost Public-Private- Partnership (PPP) efforts in the country. SBIRI was the first of its kind, early stage, innovation focused PPP initiative in the area of Biotechnology.