

RENEWAL OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY, MINISTRY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, AND BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION FOR GRAND CHALLENGES INDIA PARTNERSHIP TO ACCELERATE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOR GLOBAL HEALTH NEEDS

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Biotechnology, Genetics & Health related developments

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), originally signed in 2012, to support innovative approaches for developing new preventions, therapies and interventions needed to solve health (human and animal), food and nutritional inequities on 7th June 2022 in New Delhi.

DBT and the Gates Foundation had previously signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of health and development issues on July 18, 2012, for five years, which was further renewed for 5 years till 17th July, 2022. Under this joint partnership, in the last 10 years, programs in diverse areas under maternal and child health, nutrition, sanitation, infectious disease, data science approaches have been undertaken. The program has also brought together and leveraged the best of the nation's researchers and innovators with international best-practices to address some of the grand challenges that society faces.



Through the renewed MoU, the partnership will articulate and implement new strategic direction and to continue awarding and administering a suite of programs in the larger field of public health, tailored to fulfill the strategic needs and requirements of the country and then the rest of

the world.

Present on the occasion also was Mark Suzman, CEO, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. He said, *“The Gates Foundation values our longstanding relationship with the Indian government’s Department of Biotechnology, and we are honored to continue to support the ministry’s efforts to promote innovative research and enhance domestic biotechnology capacity in India. India’s health and agricultural systems are already strong, but together we can make them even more resilient. I am excited about the potential of this collaboration to address health and food inequities in India and around the world.”*

The renewed MoU the partnership pledged a combined USD 50 million investment to the joint initiative, to continue to explore and expand funding arenas and mechanisms to support innovators, focused on early-mid stage research and product development to tackle health and developmental issues.

Dr. Rajesh S. Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India stated *“Such partnerships bring together the best and the brightest by sharing and leveraging each partners strength and resources. The Grand Challenges India partnership exemplifies this, where the partners focus on identifying and funding affordable and innovative solutions to public health challenges not only within India but also for the developing world. The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated what can be achieved with the concerted efforts of Government and Private Sector. The GCI partnership will look to further unleashing this new power, resilience and capabilities in Indian innovation ecosystem in alignment with the goals of the Government of India priorities in health innovation and science and technology.”*

The event also saw announcement of the latest open call for funding on Diagnostics for Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)- Lymphatic Filariasis (LF). The call focuses on developing point-of-care, novel cost-effective diagnostics for lymphatic filariasis for use in national Lymphatic Filariasis elimination programs. The goal of this challenge is to have a reasonably inexpensive, durable and accurate point of care testing method(s) that can be used in developing/remote geographies. Successful diagnostics/novel approaches set through this call would then be supported for further validation and development to understand that they would be used in public programmes for LF elimination.

About DBT

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India promotes and accelerates the development of biotechnology in India, including growth and application of biotechnology in the areas of agriculture, healthcare, animal sciences, environment and industry.

About BIRAC

Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) is a not-for-profit Section 8, Schedule B, Public Sector Enterprise, set up by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India as an Interface Agency to strengthen and empower the emerging Biotech enterprise to undertake strategic research and innovation, addressing nationally relevant product development needs.

About Grand Challenges India

The GCI supported programmes have fostered innovative solutions that cater the needs of socially and economically weaker sections of the society through operational research and make

evidence-based recommendations for the policy makers. The GCI have been designing programs focusing the affordable innovations by fostering multidisciplinary transformational collaborations to speed impact.

Grand Challenges India has awarded 120+ projects Pan India across public health and development in alignment with some government initiatives such as Swacch Bharat Abhiyaan, National Nutrition Mission, Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat etc.

For Further Information: Contact Communication Cell of DBT/BIRAC

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