



PRESS RELEASE

BIRAC celebrates its 6th Foundation Day

New Delhi, March 20, 2018: The Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) celebrated its 6th Foundation Day on Tuesday in New Delhi. Themed as 'Sustaining Innovation – A Market Driven Pathway', the event was attended by a large number of dignitaries from the scientific and industry sectors both from within the country and overseas.

Inaugurating the event, the Chief Guest, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences and Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India said, 'BIRAC has played a critical role in supporting the entrepreneurial aspirations of brightest minds in the country through its programs and mentor support networks in keeping with the Government's mandate. It is through these efforts that we are able to develop affordable products and technologies that will better the lives of our people. I commend the work of BIRAC and am convinced that this is only the beginning of success.'

The Guest of Honor Dr. Vinod Paul, Hon'ble Member (Health), NITI Aayog, Government of India said, 'The role that BIRAC has played in bringing together healthcare, entrepreneurship and science has been pivotal. From affordable devices or diagnostics, to treatments, BIRAC supported innovators and technologies are on their way to changing healthcare in India and beyond.'

Through the course of six years, BIRAC has supported over 650 projects, more than 500 start-ups, & entrepreneurs, and 30 incubators across the country, resulting in over 100 products and technologies and 150 Intellectual property rights being generated.

'A 6th Foundation Day is a testament to the commitment of the organization to its mandate, in this case, bringing together innovators and entrepreneurs, mentors and peer-networks with the goal to harness the power of biotechnology to do good for society.' said Dr. Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Secretary Department of Biotechnology and Chairman, BIRAC.

BIRAC implements its mandate through a wide range of high impact initiatives, providing access to risk capital through targeted funding, facilitating technology transfer, and supporting intellectual property management and handholding schemes for biotech firms to make them globally competitive.

BIRAC has over 10 flagship schemes that are supported by funding from the Department of Biotechnology, and manages 7 collaboratively funded programs with international partners, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Nesta, the Wellcome Trust and USAID, among others. BIRAC tries to galvanize the social impact by piloting research and extension services within a series of thematic calls and other global definite initiatives to improve public health and beyond.

The event also saw the felicitation of Prof. G Padmanabhan, Former Director and current Honorary Professor of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, on the occasion of his 80th birthday and the release of the second volume of his memoirs, titled 'Doing science in India: My second innings'.

The event also saw the announcement of the preliminary winners of the SoCH (Solutions for Community Health) awards. This award is an innovation challenge award which was launched on the MyGov portal in September 2017. This challenge has two themes, platform technologies for reducing disease burden (communicable and non-communicable diseases) and sanitation and waste recycling. The winners will now have 6 months and 15 lakhs INR to develop a minimal viable prototype and will then compete for the larger 50 lakh INR award within their categories.

The Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation partnership Grand Challenges India through its Program Management Unit housed at BIRAC (PMU-BIRAC) also announced an upcoming new initiative on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) directed at encouraging innovations in surveillance data, technologies and products and removing antibiotics from effluents in tackling AMR. The application process will open shortly.

BIRAC and PerkinElmer, Inc., USA have agreed to partner with the intention to promote a portfolio of 'Indian led revenue-based innovations/start ups' in multidisciplinary areas comprising of medical devices, point of care, algorithms and information technology/software in thrust areas including maternal health, newborn health and food. Under this partnership calls will be announced to support innovators for funding, mentorship and incubation space. With close association of PerkinElmer, industry partner, from an early stage, the innovators would gain from business mentorship and validation of the product/ technologies to enhance global competitiveness.

BIRAC has over the years facilitated creation of a vibrant start up ecosystem. We are pleased that today on we are seeing the impact of this ecosystem in not only providing affordable solutions for societal problems but also enhancing innovation competence. It is now important to develop robust pathways to sustain these innovations' said Dr. Renu Swarup, Senior Adviser, Department of Biotechnology and Managing Director, BIRAC.

The BIRAC Foundation Day plenary talks and panel discussions were aimed at building momentum for health and development initiatives via innovations and to foster scientific collaboration among national and international groups and researchers. The focus of this year's event was on sustaining innovation and survival of start-ups in the market, once they are launched. The first panel will discuss the challenges start-ups face on the way to the market and the second will shift focus to addressing the sustainability issue for start-ups once they reach the market.

About BIRAC

Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) is a not-for-profit Public Sector Enterprise, set up by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology Government of India, to empower the emerging biotech industry to undertake strategic research and innovation. BIRAC is a new 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, IP management and handholding schemes that help bring innovation excellence to Indian biotech firms and make them globally competitive. BIRAC has initiated several schemes, networks and platforms that help to bridge the existing gap between industry-academia research and facilitate novel, high quality and cost-effective affordable technologies. BIRAC has initiated partnerships with several national and global partners to collaborate and deliver the salient features of its mandate.