



“BIRAC@5: Impacting the Biotech Ecosystem”: 5th Foundation Day on March 20-21, 2017

Government aims to make India a global biotech hub by 2020

New Delhi, March 20: The Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) celebrated its 5th Foundation Day on Monday in New Delhi. The 5th Foundation Day aptly themed ‘*Impacting the Biotech Innovation Ecosystem*’ was presided over by the Minister of State for Science and Technology & Earth Sciences, Mr. Y. S. Chowdary, and attended by a large number of dignitaries from the scientific and industry sectors both from within the country and overseas.

BIRAC is a not-for-profit public sector enterprise, set up by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India which acts as an interface agency to support emerging biotech enterprises to undertake strategic research and innovation, to address nationally relevant product development needs. Through the course of five years, BIRAC has supported over 618 projects, 850 start-ups, entrepreneurs, biotech companies and organizations and 20 incubators across the country, resulting in over 66 products and technologies and 120 Intellectual property rights being generated.

“Research and innovation has been one of the key areas that the Prime Minister and this government have focused on. BIRAC, which has completed five years today, stands at the cusp of a great leap. Globally, BIRAC has been hailed as one of the most effective government measures to create an enabling environment for research and development to flourish in a country. We aim to develop India into a global innovation hub by 2020 and BIRAC has paved the way to deliver on that mandate,” said Mr. Y. S. Chowdary, Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences.

BIRAC supports entrepreneurs and start-ups at different stages of innovation – from the ideation stage to managing intellectual property rights and finally to the commercialization of products. Different initiatives of BIRAC target different stages of the innovation ecosystem from ideation stages to proof-of-concept and late stage validation to product development. BIRAC has 9 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. Social Innovation is a key focus for affordable and accessible product development.

“Innovation and research must be directed toward addressing the most pressing problems of society. We’re proud that BIRAC and the Department of Biotechnology are spearheading this effort in the biotechnology domain. Since its inception in 2012, BIRAC has created nearly two dozen incubators across the country and supported over 350 start-ups. We firmly believe that social entrepreneurship is the key to creating an inclusive society and our government is committed to providing all the necessary support,” said Dr. K. VijayRaghavan, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology and Chairman, BIRAC.

The science and technology sector will play a key role in the government’s *Start-Up India Action Plan*. The DBT, in line with the *Start-Up India Action Plan* has undertaken a number of initiatives centered on the three pillars of an ideal innovation ecosystem – funding, mentoring and capacity building, and the infrastructure to translate scientific research into commercial products. To this end, 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.

“Through initiatives such as Start-Up India and the Science and Technology for Harnessing Innovations or SATHI, the government is ushering in supportive policies and removing regulatory barriers to create an atmosphere of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. The world as a whole stands to gain with Indian innovators stepping up and changing the way we address the grand challenges we face today. We are proud that BIRAC has created an enabling environment for the biotechnology industry to prosper,” said Dr. Renu Swarup, Senior Adviser, Department of Biotechnology and Managing Director, BIRAC.

The BIRAC Foundation will be followed by the Grand Challenges India Meeting to be held from 21st to 24th March, 2017 which will have the participation of BMGF, Wellcome Trust, USAID and Grand Challenges Innovators from Brazil, Canada, Bangladesh, Korea, South Africa, Kenya, Switzerland.