

## Several projects approved under DBT-BIRAC COVID-19 Research Consortium Call

**DBT-BIRAC Call on COVID-19 Research Consortium**

**Proposals sought on development of diagnostics, vaccines, therapeutics and other interventions**

**16 proposals have been recommended for funding support**

New Delhi, April 20: Union Ministry of Science and Technology's Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and its public sector undertaking Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) have called for project proposals under their COVID-19 Research Consortium.

The first phase of the call ended on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and around 500 applications were received from academia and the industry. A multi-tiered review process is on and till date 16 proposals for devices, diagnostics, vaccine candidates, therapeutics and other interventions have been recommended for receiving funding support under the Consortium.

A multifaceted approach is being adopted to ensure that vaccine candidates utilizing different platforms and at different stages of development are fast tracked through this Research Consortium under funding from DBT's National Biopharma Mission. Both, repurposing of existing vaccine candidates for immediate protection of high-risk groups and novel vaccine candidate development were considered while selecting proposals under this call.

Funding support has been recommended to Cadila Healthcare Ltd for advancing the development of a DNA Vaccine candidate against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and to Bharat Biotech International Ltd for a COVID-19 vaccine candidate utilising the inactivated rabies vector platform.

Further, Serum Institute of India Private Limited (SIIPL) will be supported for Phase III human clinical trials study of a recombinant BCG vaccine (VPM1002) planned in high-risk populations and National Institute of Immunology for the development of a novel vaccine evaluation platform to support SARS-CoV-2 vaccine development.

In addition, OncoSeek Bio Pvt Ltd will be provided support to create an *in vitro* Lung Organoid model and Virchow Biotech Pvt Ltd. for production of purified immunoglobulin G,

IgG, at commercial scale from COVID-19 convalescent sera and high titers of equine hyper immune globulin for the treatment of COVID infected patients on large scale.

Following companies will receive financial support to scale-up the production of molecular and rapid diagnostic tests : Mylab Discovery Solutions Pvt Ltd, Huwel Lifesciences, Ubio Biotechnology Systems Pvt Ltd, Dhiti Life Sciences Pvt Ltd, MagGenome Technologies Pvt Ltd, Bigtec Pvt Ltd and Yaathum Biotech Pvt Ltd.

Further, a common shared facility to manufacture diagnostic kits and ventilators will be established at Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone (AMTZ) under National Biopharma Mission to provide scale up in production capacity to different manufacturers.

Besides, development and deployment of contactless, affordable thermopile based ultrasonic sensors for screening of COVID-19 suspects and indigenous production of novel PPE for healthcare professionals will be supported.

**For Further Information: Contact Communication Cell of DBT/BIRAC**