

BIRAC aims at increased role in creating translation facilities

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BIRAC is presently focussing on setting up a preclinical toxicology facility by strengthening a private institution and make it accessible to researchers. The necessary ground work has already been completed. It aims to provide cutting edge skills of scientific leadership through industry-academia collaboration in this important research space, with a national mission focussing on innovation and translational research for accelerating discovery research to early development. BIRAC presents itself as the foundational building block in the national mission on biologics and biopharmaceuticals.

"BIRAC has been able to provide platform to the scientists for entrepreneurship and translation work," stated Dr Renu Swarup, managing director, BIRAC recently while speaking at the Australia Business Week in India 2015 event at New Delhi. Talking in particular about the collaboration with Australian counterparts, Dr Swarup remarked further, "Since the initiation of Indo-Australian Strategic Research Fund in 2006, much has been achieved so far. As we completed five years of partnership on various projects, there have been many accomplishments. So far eight rounds of funding have been completed and fifty projects supported. These projects include the ones on stem cells, neutraceuticals and bioremediation among other areas."

BIRAC has already organized few stakeholder meetings and analysed the current 'art of the possible in India' to define the blue print and implement the mission. A Program Proposal Management Unit (PPMU) is also being created to assist conducting and coordinating the future activities.

Dr Swarup emphasized on the need to focus on translational research. "We are trying to help build early translational capacity and skilled human resources for industry. The DBT has collaborated with European countries in both academic as well as industrial projects. Now is the time for next phase of collaboration," added Dr Swarup.

Improved wheat production

BIRAC aims to support a project on "Improved wheat for heat tolerance and climate resilience" which addresses a very crucial area of crop biotechnology under the RAPID initiative in collaboration with USAID. The goal of the proposed project is to develop high yielding heat tolerant wheat cultivars for the Indo-Gangetic plains. BIRAC is presently exploring the

possibilities of involving more Government funding agencies in this initiative and identified the major activities for taking this initiative forward i.e. setting up of centralized facilities for haploid production and genotyping, training of man on word power and the relevant wheat varieties.