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BIRAC puts focus on anti-snake venom production

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Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) will soon begin research for developing novel tools, technologies and processes pertaining to snake bite problem and product optimization/scale-up on Anti-snake venom.

BIRAC's initiative in this regard is significant as India is estimated to have the highest snakebite mortality in the world. It is a common and frequently devastating environmental and occupational disease, especially in rural areas of tropical developing countries and is responsible for tens of thousands of deaths and disabilities every year.

BIRAC has now invited research proposals on development of novel and alternate ways of anti-snake venom (ASV) production; development of new diagnostics kits for the identification of the snake biting species; and characterization, evaluation and validation facility for ASV.

The progamme will focus on cost effective, novel and innovative approaches. The focus will also be on generating ASV with better product profiles and greater cost effectiveness than current products in the market.

This programme would encompass some of the indicative priority areas for submitting the proposals such as new ways of producing ASV like recombinant antibody based ASV production technologies; identification of herbal/peptide and small molecules for possible enhancement of available window for management; plant-made recombinant snakebite anti-venom antibody cocktail; and a pan-Asian anti-venom – with high potency anti-venom designed for several countries across the South Asian region, produced in large volumes and dispensed in a single dose.