

India, UK sign agreements, creation of Newton-Babha fund announced

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In a meeting held between Dr Harsh Vardhan, minister for science and technology and the UK's minister for universities, science and cities the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP held here in New Delhi on November 12, 2014, it was decided that a new fund known as the Newton-Bhabha Fund will be taken to further relations.

This was the 4th UK-India Science and Innovation Council (SIC) meeting held at New Delhi, which was Co-Chaired by both the science ministers. They applauded the significant role that the UK-India research and innovation partnership has played in bringing together the best researchers in both countries. The countries are actively cooperating to address global challenges through the application of science and technology.

The two Ministers noted that the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) has been successful in building new scientific partnerships through joint research projects and networking. It was agreed in principle to augment and continue UKIERI Phase III.

The Newton-Bhabha Fund (£50 million over 5 years from the UK and matched efforts from India) is an important program, with a strong interdisciplinary dimension that will further strategize the science, research and innovation cooperation between the UK and India.

A series of new Newton-Bhabha programs were welcomed, including :

1. British Council India and the Department of Science and Technology, India joint PhD student mobility program. This will sponsor UK and Indian PhD students to spend a period of their study (3 to 6 months) in premier Indian and UK higher education institutions starting from March 2015. The aim of the program is to pave the way for the next generation of researchers in the UK and India to interact with each other and build long-term R&D linkages and collaborations.

2. The UK's Medical Research Council (MRC) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) joint initiative for new research projects in Mental Health and Substance Abuse. Up to £2 million is available from the UK and ICMR will fund the Indian component.

3. Up to £10 million for joint Global Research Program in Women's and Children's Health funded by the UK's Medical Research Council (MRC), Department of International Development (DFID) and India's Department of Biotechnology (DBT)
4. Up to £7 million for Joint Centre Partnerships in Cancer Biology, Translational Regenerative Medicines in Neuroscience and Antimicrobial Resistance, funded by UK's Medical Research Council (MRC) and India's Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
5. Joint UK-India centre(s) for research in Renewable Energy co-funded by RCUK Energy program and India's Department of Science and Technology (DST).
6. Innovate UK and the Department of Science & Technology, India joint program to support business-led research and development aimed at tackling grand societal challenges.