

Funds for pharma research taken care of says govt

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As per the information revealed by the union minister of state for science and technology, Dr Jitendra Singh, the government provides soft loans to Indian Pharma industries including small scale for research and development (R&D) activities, which includes support for instruments under the Drugs and Pharmaceutical Research Program of the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

The government also provides partial support for pilot plant equipment and machinery, including specialized equipment to industry, small scale units in any sector, the pharmaceutical sector for development and demonstration of innovative technologies through the PACE (Patent Acquisition and Collaborative Research and Technology Development) scheme of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR).

The S&T minister spoke about Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a public sector undertaking of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT). Innovative Research is funded in startup's and SME's in the Biotech sector, which also includes pharma units for developing affordable health care products. The innovative research component includes some equipment which are required for research activities.

The Department of Science and Technology under the Ministry of Science and Technology has been implementing a Plan Scheme (Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Research Program - DPRP) since 1994-95 for promoting R&D in the Drugs and Pharmaceutical sector with the objective to synergise the strengths of publicly funded R&D institutions and Indian Pharmaceutical Industry; create an enabling infrastructure, mechanisms and linkages to facilitate new drug development; stimulate skill development of human resources in R&D for drugs and pharmaceuticals; extend soft loans to Pharma industrial R&D projects; and enhance the nation's self-reliance in drugs and pharmaceuticals especially in areas critical to national health requirements.

Under this program as on 13th August, 2014, 110 industries - institutional alliances both in modern and Indian systems of medicine including veterinary drugs have been funded. The program has supported R&D projects on Tuberculosis, Malaria,

Diarrhoea, Filariasis, Diabetes, Psychosomatic disorders, Kala Azar, Cataract, Cancer, Dementia, HIV/AIDS, Anti Fungal, Anti Virals, Anti Cancer, Anti Bacterial, Anti Rabies, Anti Obesity, Anti Asthma, Arthritis, Anti Amoebiasis etc.; vaccines for Dengue, Japanese Encephalitis, Hepatitis-B etc.

48 state-of-the art infrastructure for Pharmaceutical R&D has been created in different premier institutions and Universities on Bio-availability, Pharmacoinformatics, Regulatory Toxicology, Safety Pharmacology at NIPER, Mohali; Pharmacokinetic and Metabolic Studies, Regulatory Pharmacology and Toxicology, Medium Throughput Screening at CDRI, Lucknow; Transgenic and Gene Knockout Mice, Clinical Research facility to Stem Cell Technologies and regenerative medicine, Biosafety Level 4 Laboratory at CCMB, Hyderabad; Bioequivalence, Pharmacovigilance, New Chemical Entities development, Animal Facility for Indian System of Medicine etc. have been created in other Universities and Institutions.

Since 2004-05, the program has extended 73 soft loans for Indian Pharma Industry R&D projects at a simple interest rate of 3 percent per annum with repayment duration of 10 years. Also from 2008-09, the program supported three grants-in-aid projects to Indian Pharma industries for conducting clinical trials in neglected diseases such as malaria, kala-azar, etc.

The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) launched a scheme in the 12th five year plan - PRISM (Promoting Innovations in Individuals, Start-ups and MSMEs) where it has proposed to support innovative projects in MSMEs, including those in the pharmaceutical sector, through public funded R&D institutions including national laboratories.

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) is encouraging the Indian Biotechnology Industries to participate in research projects in collaboration with academic institutions. The calls for proposals are regularly issued for strengthening the SME's both at national and international levels.

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has set up Sophisticated Analytical Instrument Facilities (SAIFs) in different parts of the country to provide sophisticated analytical instrument facilities to research workers in general and specially to institutions which do not have such instruments through its Sophisticated Analytical Instrument Facilities (SAIF) program. This enables them to pursue R&D activities requiring such facilities and keep pace with developments taking place globally. The SAIFs are equipped with sophisticated analytical instruments to meet the needs of research workers in various areas of science and technology. The instrument facilities at the SAIFs are accessible to all users and are being used extensively by researchers from all parts of the country. These facilities are being used by small scale pharma units also.