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India now part of global efforts to secure genetic diversity

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India joins the Svalbard Global Seed Vault for safeguarding food security



India has joined the global initiative in securing crop genetic diversity by depositing 25 Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR) accessions of pigeon pea in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV) on April 9, 2014. Â MrÂ Ashish Bahuguna, Secretary (A&C) led the delegation comprising of Dr Manas K Mandal, DG (Life Sciences), DRDO and Dr K C Bansal, director, NBPGR (ICAR) which made the first such deposit by India as "safety duplicates" in the global gene bank.

The SGSV is jointly managed by the Norway's Department of Agriculture and the Global Crop Diversity Trust (GCDT) under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The SGSV, commissioned in February 2008, is a unique facility located in the permafrost region in far north (780 N), in the arctic island of Svalbard, about 1300 miles from the North Pole. The SGSV acts as a 'Safe Repository' for conserving rare seed material of the food and forage crops already conserved in different national gene banks across the world. So far, 59 countries have joined SGSV by depositing their precious germplasm. At present the total number of accessions held in the SGSV stands over 0.8 million.

Earlier, Dr S Ayyappan, secretary, DARE and director general, ICAR accorded approval for this first official deposit from India. Dr K C Bansal on behalf of NBPGR signed the SDA. During the above seed deposit ceremony, Dr Luigi Guarino, senior scientist, and Mr Michael Koch, director of finance (GCDT) were present along with Dr Ola T Westengen, coordinator of Operation and Management of the SGSV from the Nordic Genetic Resource Centre, Norway.