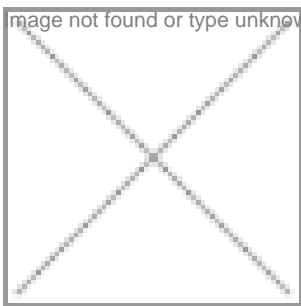


GEAC permits three more GM crop trials

08 September 2010 | News



The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) has given the go ahead to the trials of three more genetically modified (GM) crops. The committee that met on July 30, 2010, in Hyderabad, considered requests from three companies namely Syngenta Biosciences, JK Agri Genetics and and permitted them to carry out the field trials of some specific GM crops.

Considering the recommendations of the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM), GEAC gave permission to Syngenta Biosciences to conduct Biosafety Research Level-I (BRL-I) trials on transgenic corn hybrids namely NK-6240 containing cry1Ab genes. The trials will be conducted at one location each within the institutional research farm in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

The committee also approved the request from JK Agri Genetics to conduct second year BRL-1 trials on two transgenic cotton (HXH) hybrids such as JKCH-1947 Bt EGII and JKCH-1050 Bt EGII containing cry1Ac and cry1EC at two locations in the north zone during kharif 2011 in Punjab and Rajasthan, as per the standard operating procedures (SOPs) guidelines. Earlier RCGM had recommended the same.

The third company to be given permission is Dow Agrosiences India, which has been allowed to conduct BRL-II with WideStrike cotton hybrids such as WS103 and WS106 containing cry1F (Event 281-24-236) and cry1Ac (Event 3006-210-23) in the south zone. The trials will be conducted in Hyderabad, Guntur and Jaggayapetta in Andhra Pradesh; Dharwad and Haveri in Karnataka; and Coimbatore, Salem and Attur in Tami Nadu. The permission was given after the recommendations of RCGM and after the company submitted the documents related to the food, feed biosafety studies, environmental

biosafety, biosafety research trials and associated studies to GEAC.

Biocon launches critical illnesses division

Indian biotech major, Biocon, has launched a new Comprehensive Care Division, dedicated to provide affordable solutions to critical illnesses like nosocomial infections, post-surgical complications, trauma and medical emergencies. This would be the fifth division for Biocon, complementing the existing product portfolios in diabetology, oncology, nephrology and cardiology divisions.

“There is a perceptible increase in hospital-acquired infections with respect to critical care illnesses in India. This often requires treatment with specialized anti-infectives. Biocon’s Comprehensive Care Division has been set up to counter this growing challenge by providing affordable and specialized solutions to such patients,” said Dr Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, chairman and managing director of Biocon.

According to the company, with the motto of improving life, this new division will further extend the reach of Biocon’s existing branded formulations to the critical care area. The division is introducing five new products in the initial phase of launch, for the treatment of critical illnesses like septicemia, nosocomial pneumonia and other acute hospital infections. These products will include platforms based on pneumocandins (a class of echinocandins), lipopeptides, specialized cephalosporins and carbapenams.

TB cases decline 12% in India

With the implementation of Revised National Tuberculosis (TB) Control Program, the estimated rate of TB prevalence (number of TB cases both new and old, in a year) is on the decline in India.

Quoting the World Health Organization (WHO) Global TB Report 2009, the minister for health and family welfare, Government of India, Ghulam Nabi Azad, said, “The TB prevalence in India is currently 185 per 100,000 people as compared to 283 per 100,000 people in 2007. Periodic prevalence surveys conducted under the model of Directly Observed Treatment Short course project by the Tuberculosis Research Center (TRC), Chennai, has shown 12 percent annual decline in prevalence of TB.”

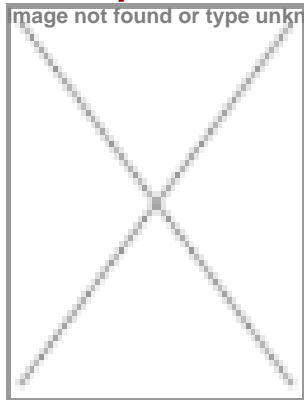
Lohmann in Indian JV for poultry vax

Lohmann Animal Health, a global major in animal health business, focusing on poultry biologicals, joins hands with Indian poultry company, Suguna, for manufacturing and marketing its range of poultry vaccines.

The joint venture (JV) company –Globion India Private Limited– is located at Genome Valley, Hyderabad. The total amount of investment in the JV is approximately 70 crore (\$15 million).

Globion has recently commissioned a state-of-the-art vaccine manufacturing facility complying with GMP standards. Globion is set to produce a basket of poultry vaccines – live and inactivated – for breeders, layers and broilers. The products will be marketed under the brand GlobiVac.

UK to partner with India in biotechnology



India and Britain are leaving no stone unturned in cultivating an “enhanced relationship” in matters of science and innovation. Newly anointed British Prime Minister, David Cameron, during his recent visit to India, wooed the Indian scientific community with the announcement of a 326 crore (£45 million) partnership between the UK charity organization, the Wellcome Trust and India’s Department of Biotechnology (DBT), to support the development of new healthcare products in India. The agreement builds on the existing Wellcome Trust-India BT Alliance – a five-year, 580 crore (£80 million)-initiative, which seeks to strengthen Indian biomedical sciences, through a series of fellowship programs. Other collaborations announced during the trip include a 29 crore (£4 million) agreement between the medical research councils of both the countries.

The special connection between India and the UK particularly in biotechnology, is not a recent phenomenon. In late 2009, three institutions from India and the UK–University of Nottingham; Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Bangalore; and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur–got together to sign a 10 crore (£1.5 million) UK-India Science Bridge, Biopharm 2020. This bridge would be a catalyst to provide incentives to scientists for research, moulding them towards commercializing their research benefits.

ICMR, MRC allot fund for Indo-UK joint research

With changing demography, there is a risk of growing epidemic in Indian population. Therefore, with an aim to promote the research and to strengthen the existing partnerships, the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and the UK Medical Research Council (MRC) has jointly initiated a research funding for non-communicable diseases. The call aims to promote collaborations between Indian and UK investigators in the area of chronic non-communicable diseases research, exploiting the mutual strengths of the two communities.

The partnership between ICMR and MRC aims to combine the strengths of the Indian and UK Chronic Disease Research communities. The proposed research program should be related to prevailing chronic diseases in India and the UK. In addition, the outcomes should ideally be meaningful to a wider international audience. The research should involve collaboration and co-leadership between Indian and UK researchers/groups and encompass work in India and the UK. Applicants will be encouraged to take a multi-disciplinary approach including health economics, social science, bio-statistics, data management, other allied health and non-health disciplines, where appropriate.

ICMR will provide funding to Indian researchers for research based in India. Approximately 46 lakh (\$0.10 million), to 98 lakh (\$0.21 million) will be available per project for its entire duration for the ICMR-funded portion of the costs. The funds are to be utilized in India only. MRC will provide funding to the UK applicants. Approximately 2.9 crore (£500,000) to 4.7 crore (£800,000) is available per project for the MRC-funded portion of the costs.

\$110 mn foreign funding for AIDS control in India

According to the information from the minister of state for health and family welfare, Dinesh Trivedi, the external aid component of National AIDS Control Program III (NACP-III) for years 2007-12 in India, was projected 5,162 crore (\$110 million).

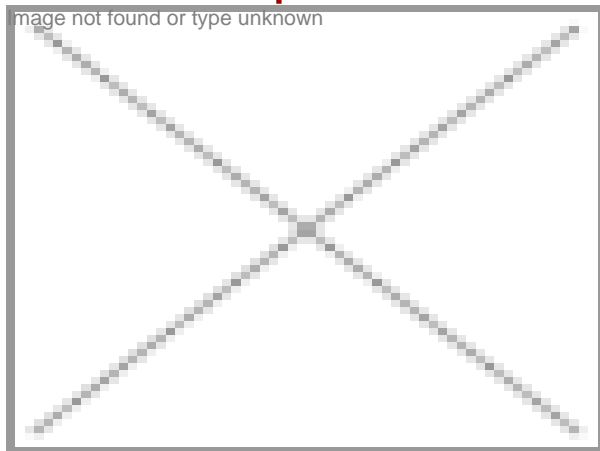
The minister added that the source of the funding includes aid from the World Bank, Department for International Development, Global Fund, United States Agency for International Aid and United Nations Development Program. The joint funding from the World Bank and Department of International Development stands at 2,629 crore and the funding from the Global Fund is at 2,237 crore.

GEAC defers phase III trials of JE vax

A Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee meet in Hyderabad, decided to defer its decision on granting permission to conduct phase III clinical trials of Japanese Encephalitis Chimeric Virus Vaccine (JE-CV) by Sanofi Pasteur India.

This decision has come despite the recommendation of Indian Council for Medical Research. Members expressed concern that JE-CV, a chimeric Flavivirus vaccine was derived from 17D strain of yellow fever vaccine and attenuated strain of JE virus. As Flaviviruses are viable, non-homologous recombination between different Flavivirus species, there is an environmental risk of its dissemination from the blood of immunized subjects through mosquitoes.

Maharashtra tops swine flu casualty list



With the onset of monsoon season, Maharashtra once again retained the top slot in the swine flu casualties. The number of reported deaths has reached 115 out of the 1,005 laboratory-confirmed cases during the

With the 76 reported deaths out of lab-confirmed cases of 1,360 Kerala comes at the second spot after Maharashtra. Karnataka had 381 reported in all.

The efforts by the government to contain the swine flu in Maharashtra, have received a setback, as the medical fraternity seems to be worried over the side-effects of the swine flu vaccines. Besides, the fact that the immunity remains only for 12 months and that the vaccine does not guarantee 100 percent immunity to the population, has made the doctors

and medical staff to doubt the effectiveness of the vaccine.

The Government of Maharashtra has proposed to return 30,000 doses of the unutilized vaccine, to the central government. The center has supplied almost 34,300 doses of Tamiflu vaccine to the state of Maharashtra from its total purchase order,

placed with the French drug maker Sanofi Pasteur.

Narayana Hrudayalaya ties up with Strand

Bangalore-based Strand Life Sciences and Mazumdar Shaw Comprehensive Cancer Centre (MSCC) of the Narayana Hrudayalaya (NH) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in translational cancer research.

The partnership is aimed at performing joint research and training in the field of translational cancer genomics and proteomics initially, leading to early detection, cure, and prolonging lives of cancer patients and providing affordable solutions. This collaboration would also lead to establishing one of the largest translational cancer centers in India.

Both the institutes have started a pilot program on comprehensive study of head and neck cancer, the leading cancer of India. The partnership will enable ground-breaking discoveries and affordable solutions for head and neck cancer patients. An exciting outcome of the partnership is to create opportunities for young Indian scientists and clinicians to work with global leaders and have access to cutting-edge scientific tools. Strand, also is a part of the public-private partnership (PPP) initiative to build the state-of-the-art functional genomics, and next-generation sequencing center in Bangalore along with the Department of Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science and Technology, Government of Karnataka and Department of Information Technology, Government of India. The center, named Ganit Labs, would be at the forefront of solving scientific issues and contribute in the genomics research and training.

Prof Vijay Chandru, chairman and CEO, Strand Life Sciences said, "It is a privilege to engage in an agreement with Narayana Hrudalaya to continue to advance important translational research that will lead to a better understanding of cancer to help patients in India and around the world. This, in turn, will hopefully lead to developing better diagnostic techniques and therapeutics."

DBT calls for Indo-Finnish tie-up

With an aim to launch ambitious joint projects of a high international standard in diagnostics between Indian and Finnish organizations, the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has invited proposals from Indian and Finnish industry partners. The potential projects will be funded by DBT in India and Tekes, a funding agency for technology and innovation in Finland.

The requirements include the partners to apply for funding from their national funding organizations. Indian and Finnish co-applicants will have to develop a joint project plan and send to both the DBT and Tekes together with the funding organization-specific documents.

The deadline for submitting the research proposals is September 10, 2010.

BEST India promotes entrepreneurship

Biotechnology Entrepreneurs Students Program (BEST) is an innovative scheme that allows student teams to showcase scientific ideas in life sciences that has merits of commercialization and scaling up.

This year again, online submission of concept notes saw exceedingly good response. Two rounds of screening resulted in short listing of 20 teams that attended a residential entrepreneurship workshop at Bangalore.

DBT awards three prizes of ₹5 lakh, ₹3 lakh, and ₹2 lakh to the three top teams. This year, to encourage and motivate budding entrepreneurs across India, ABLI decided to award another set of the same prizes.