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Kerala prepares a roadmap to spur investment in the biotech sector

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The meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan decided to set up a Biotechnology Industry Promotion and Assistance Centre (BIPAC) to extend financial support for industrial research and development programmes under public-private or public partnerships.



The Government has prepared a roadmap for the creation of an ecosystem to spur investment in the biotechnology sector and facilitate industrial development.

The first meeting of the reconstituted Kerala Biotechnology Board (KBB) earlier this month approved several schemes to promote research and entrepreneurship and provide start-up support. The meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan decided to set up a Biotechnology Industry Promotion and Assistance Centre (BIPAC) to extend financial support for industrial research and development programmes under public-private or public partnerships.

BIPAC would have a targeted funding mechanism involving a Scheme for Entrepreneurial Promotion, Refining and Industrialization Support (SEPRIS) in the initial stage and a Scheme for One-time Start-up Support (SOSS) in the subsequent phase.

Under SEPRIS, entrepreneurs would be given a grant of â?¹500,000 for developing proof of concept of their proposed venture, followed by an entrepreneurship development fund up to â?¹25 lakh. SOSS, on the other hand, seeks to support start-ups with a seed money assistance up to â?¹25 lakh.

“BIPAC will be a facility to support the final stage of industrial development which often turns out to be an insurmountable obstacle for many entrepreneurs”, says Prof. G.M. Nair, Advisor, Kerala Biotechnology Commission. “Providing seed money at this juncture is critical for an input-intensive industry like biotechnology which requires heavy investment on equipment in the initial stage,” Prof. Nair said.

Principal Secretary, Science and Technology, Mr. Suresh Das said the funding support was designed to minimize the risks associated with commercialization of products. “We have received positive feelers from industrialists willing to invest in the State.”

The KBB meeting approved a scheme to foster industry-academia partnership in biotech research. It also decided to launch the Chief Minister’s Career Advancement Programme in Biotechnology to enhance the research capabilities of young faculties and scientists. An industrial training scheme for biotech post graduate students and industry associateship programme for faculty/mid-career scientists to work in industry are other schemes on the anvil, reports The Hindu.

“If all goes well, Kerala can hope to gain a foothold in the biotech industry sector within a matter of two to three years,” Prof. Nair said.