

DST Charts Futuristic Biotechnology Roadmap, Policy for J&K

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The Department of Science and Technology is endeavouring to chart out futuristic roadmap for biotechnology, including the UT Policy for Biotechnology.

In this regard, Commissioner Secretary, Science and Technology, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting wherein senior officers presented findings from their extensive study visits to India's premier biotechnology clusters including Genome Valley (Hyderabad), Guwahati Biotech Park and facilities at Lucknow, Vizag and Chandigarh.

The delegation comprising Special Secretary Reyaz Ahmed Beigh, Director Finance Madan Lal, Additional Secretary JKSTC Neelam Khajuria, Additional Director Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed, Deputy Secretary Asif Chandel and others studied operational models, technology incubation frameworks and industry-academia linkages at these established biotech hubs.

Deputy Secretary Dr. Abdul Khabir made a detailed presentation highlighting the globally best practices and sector-specific opportunities for Jammu and Kashmir.

Dr. Shahid Iqbal directed for immediate formulation of a comprehensive J&K Biotechnology Policy, recognizing that the Union Territory sits at the confluence of extraordinary natural wealth and untapped

scientific potential.

With over 6,500 plant species including 200+ high-value medicinal and aromatic plants including saffron, lavender, wild mushrooms, rare herbs and unique climatic zones from subtropical Jammu to alpine Kashmir, J&K possesses inherent advantages that remain underexploited in India's rapidly expanding \$130 billion bio-economy, projected to reach \$300 billion by 2030 under the national BioE3 Policy.

The Secretary emphasized that the proposed policy will strategically target the agriculture biotechnology for crop improvement and climate resilience; pharmaceutical manufacturing leveraging J&K's rich phytochemical biodiversity; food processing and nutraceuticals from horticulture produce; dairy biotechnology for probiotic innovations; industrial enzyme production and environmental bioremediation for water bodies like Dal and Wular lakes.

The policy framework will align with J&K's existing strengths while creating new value chains in bio-

manufacturing, moving beyond raw material export to high-margin biotech products.

Critically addressing the youth employment challenge, Dr. Shahid Iqbal suggested a structured internship programme for biotechnology graduates from J&K institutions, creating direct pathways from academic training to industrial application. This initiative responds to the gap between qualified graduates and sector-relevant opportunities within the UT.

The Department is operationalizing two DBT-funded Industrial Biotech Parks at Kathua (Jammu region) and Handwara (Kashmir region)—representing a combined Government of India investment of ₹84.66 crore—as Centres of Excellence in Industrial Biotechnology. These facilities will transition from infrastructure assets to active innovation hubs supporting startup incubation, technology commercialization and R&D in fermentation, enzyme technology, herbal extraction and analytical testing.

The recently announced budget outlay will activate these parks as magnets for scientific talent and entrepreneurial capital.

Drawing lessons from Genome Valley's public-private partnership model and Guwahati Biotech Park's incubation success with 26 lab facilities and NABL accreditation pathways, the DST vision positions J&K's biotech ecosystem within a larger convergence framework. Strategic partnerships with SKUAST-Jammu (NIRF Rank 7) and SKUAST-Kashmir (Rank 3 among state agricultural universities), along with CSIR-IIIM's pharmaceutical R&D capabilities, will provide the intellectual infrastructure for translating indigenous knowledge into patents, products, and prosperity.

The Secretary emphasized that biotechnology represents not merely a policy sector but a transformative pathway—converting J&K's biodiversity into biowealth, its scientific institutions into innovation engines and youth into a skilled biotech workforce ready for India's bio-manufacturing century.

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essential species and are being carefully nurtured to ensure healthy growth.

Dr. Sanjolly Gupta, Project Research Scientist, ICMR-AIIMS Jammu, lauded the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' initiative, highlighting its role in inspiring students and the community to plant, nurture, and protect trees, fostering environmental conservation. Most saplings planted during the first phase were

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