

Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), and Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) sign 'Engagement Strategy' for Cooperation on Vaccine Research, Development and Innovation

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The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, along with its Public Sector Undertaking, Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) have signed the 'Engagement Strategy' with Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) on 18th September, 2025 for cooperation on vaccine and allied technology research, development and innovation. This is a renewal of the earlier Engagement Strategy which was executed in October 2019 for a period of five years. The matter has been considered and noted by the Union Cabinet.

CEPI is an innovative partnership between public, private, philanthropic and civil organisations to stimulate and accelerate the development of vaccines and associated competencies/technologies against emerging infectious diseases and enable access to people during outbreaks. As of March 2025, several national governments, the European Commission and philanthropic organisations, such as Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust are involved with CEPI.

DBT and BIRAC have partnered with CEPI since 2019, for cooperation on vaccine development for diseases of epidemic potential. Key achievements of this cooperation include early-stage development of vaccine candidates for Chikungunya, Coronavirus and Monkey pox; creation of shared infrastructure such as bioassay laboratory and animal facility; and conducting capacity building/training programmes. The DBT-BRIC-THSTI bioassay laboratory and the experimental animal facility have been recognized by the global CEPI as part of their Centralized Lab Network Lab and CEPI Animal Lab Network, respectively. These facilities serve as national resources for vaccine development. The Bioassay lab has so far supported development of several Indian and global vaccine candidates at different stages, from pre-clinical to phase-3 efficacy trials. In addition, training programmes on vaccine development and clinical trials have been organized, contributing to capacity building in the domain.

Taking note of these achievements and also to continue this engagement further for cooperation on vaccine and allied technology research, development and innovation, the 'Engagement Strategy' between DBT, BIRAC and CEPI has been renewed. The scope of the renewed Engagement Strategy has been broadened to encompass research and development for allied technologies, such as monoclonal antibodies. The pathogens addressed by CEPI will include those identified in the WHO Blueprint list of priority diseases.

Renewal of the ‘Engagement Strategy’ with global CEPI is a significant step in advancing India’s R&D preparedness to pandemics, leveraging CEPI’s technical expertise and our strong R&D capabilities. By fostering collaboration and by strengthening critical infrastructure & skilled human resources, this engagement aims to enable timely and effective response to emerging health threats, contributing to the broader goals of good health and well-being, aligning with national development priorities and Sustainable Development Goals.

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