

National Biodiversity Authority disburses Rs. 5.68 Crore in Access and Benefit-Sharing Funds for Biodiversity Conservation

Posted On: 30 AUG 2026 8:10PM by PIB Delhi

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) has disbursed Rs. 5.68 crore under the Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) mechanism arising from the utilisation of biological resources. The funds have been channelled to State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs), Union Territory Biodiversity Councils (UTBCs) and a national research institution, primarily in relation to Okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*), Cucumber (*Cucumis sativus*) and Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*), besides specified microbial and agricultural biological resources.

The largest ABS component relates to Okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*), covering 139 varieties and 28 hybrids, for which the NBA has released Rs. 3.51 crore to 32 State Biodiversity Boards and Union Territory Biodiversity Councils. The ABS amount was received from M/s. Nunhems India Pvt. Ltd. in connection with its access to Okra.

The other major ABS components relate to Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*), covering 662 varieties and 15 hybrids and Cucumber (*Cucumis sativus*), covering 1009 varieties and 14 hybrids. These biological resources were accessed through markets/traders by M/s. Nunhems India Pvt. Ltd., M/s. East West Seeds India Pvt. Ltd. and M/s. Bayer Science and Innovation Pvt. Ltd.

The major ABS recipients among the State Biodiversity Boards and Union Territory Biodiversity Councils are:

Sl. No.	States/UTs	Amount released (Rs.)
1.	Gujarat	88,79,304
2.	West Bengal	78,08,691
3.	Madhya Pradesh	64,90,418
4.	Odisha	59,01,641
5.	Bihar	45,59,602
6.	Uttar Pradesh	36,90,952
7.	Tamil Nadu	34,11,119

8.	Andhra Pradesh	30,58,472
9.	Chhattisgarh	24,82,991
10.	Maharashtra	17,57,359
11.	Others	87,77,728
	Total	5,68,18,277

In these cases, the biological resources were accessed from markets and traders, making it not feasible to trace them to specific individual farmers, communities or a single identifiable geographic source. Accordingly, the modality recommended by the Expert Committee and approved by the Authority provides for distribution of the beneficiary share among the States and Union Territories where the concerned biological resource is cultivated.

In addition, the NBA has disbursed benefit-sharing funds to CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) – National Culture of Industrial Microorganisms, Pune, from an ABS amount received from M/s. Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd., Mumbai.

The funds disbursed to the SBBs and UTBCs are to be utilised as per Section 32 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, for activities supporting the objectives of the Act. These include documentation and updation of People's Biodiversity Registers; conservation and sustainable use of biological resources; restoration of degraded ecosystems; protection of wild relatives of cultivated plants; strengthening of Biodiversity Heritage Sites; development and maintenance of biodiversity databases; capacity building; research; and community-oriented livelihood enhancement activities.

The funds disbursed to the research institution are to support activities including maintenance of repositories of biological resources, research and bio-survey activities, capacity building in taxonomy and conservation, and in-situ and ex-situ conservation.

With this disbursement, the total ABS amount disbursed by the NBA so far has crossed Rs. 191 crore. The disbursements reaffirm the NBA's commitment to ensuring that benefits arising from the utilisation of India's biological resources are directed towards biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, strengthening of institutional capacities and activities benefiting communities and other stakeholders associated with the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

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