

Minutes of the meeting of BioNEST-UDSC 'Advisory Council' held in Meeting Room of BioNEST on 16th Dec 2023 at 3:00 PM

1. A meeting of the BioNEST-UDSC 'Advisory Council' was held on 16th Dec 2023 at 3:00 PM in the Meeting Room of BioNEST-UDSC. The following members attended the meeting:

Prof. Pradeep Burma, Department of Genetics, UDSC (Chairman)
Dr Debasisa Mohanty, Director, National Institute of Immunology, Delhi (External Expert)
Prof. S.K. Khare, Department of Chemistry, IIT Delhi (External Expert)
Prof. Chinmay K. Mukhopadhyay, SCMM, JNU, Delhi (External Expert)
Prof Swati Saha, Department of Microbiology (Member Secretary, Coordinator, BioNEST-UDSC)
Prof Rajeev Kaul, Department of Microbiology (Special Invitee, Nodal Officer, BioNEST - UDSC)
Prof. Y.P. Kharsa, Department of Microbiology (Special Invitee, Nodal Officer, BioNEST - UDSC)
Prof. Alo Nag, Department of Biochemistry, UDSC (Member)
Prof Rani Gupta (Department of Microbiology, UDSC)

2. The Agenda of the meeting was as follows:
- Welcoming address by the Chairman
 - Report on progress made at BioNEST-UDSC, presented by BioNEST Coordinator
 - Tour of the Facility
 - Discussion on the future of BioNEST-UDSC
3. The Chairman welcomed all the members of the Advisory Council and thanked them for making time to attend the meeting.
4. Report on progress made at BioNEST-UDSC, presented by BioNEST Coordinator:

- The Member Secretary (who is also BioNEST Coordinator and Designated Project Investigator) updated the Council members on the progress made by BioNEST-UDSC since its inception. She briefly outlined the genesis of the program, and the work accomplished by the BioNEST till date, with the help of a short presentation.
- The Council was briefed on the various equipment that had been purchased and installed over the past three years. Prof. Debasisa Mohanty enquired how the User Charges of BioNEST-UDSC compared with those of other Bio-Incubators in the Delhi-NCR region. Prof. Sunil Khare further added that BioNEST-UDSC was in a prime location, in an academic setting, well connected by road and air, giving incubatees a distinct advantage.
- The Council was apprised of the five staff positions in BioNEST-UDSC (Chief Executive Officer, Technical Officer, Technical Assistant, Laboratory Attendant, MTS).
- The Council was briefed about the various training workshops that had been conducted over the past two years (a total of 22 workshops, with more than 200 people receiving hands-on training). Prof. Saha apprised the members of the high rating of these workshops by participants, based on the Feedback Forms submitted by them. Prof. Chinmay Mukhopadhyay suggested that at the end of any workshop or training program the participants may be challenged through a quiz or test, which

Swati Saha

A

Dr

Debasisa Mohanty

CH

Rani Gupta

- The Council was briefed about the two thrust areas at BioNEST-UDSC:
Thrust area 1: Development of various bioactives for industrial and agricultural sectors
Thrust area 2: Development of molecular and diagnostic reagents for human and animal health sector.
Prof. Saha informed that the 17 incubatees housed to date were more or less equally distributed over the two thrust areas, and outlined the work being carried out by each biotech start-up or individual scientist who was incubating BioNEST-UDSC, also highlighting the companies who had put up stalls at the recently concluded Global Bio-India 2023 mega event
- The BioNEST -UDSC Staff Team displayed the website and social media accounts of BioNEST-UDSC to Council members. These included the Facebook and LinkedIn pages as well as videos on You tube. The Council members were appreciative of the efforts of the Staff Team. The External Experts suggested promoting BioNEST activities through short professionally made videos that could be posted on social media. It was agreed that this aspect would be further explored.

5. Tour of the BioNEST-UDSC Facility:

- The Council members were given a tour of the BioNEST-UDSC Facility. All members were very appreciative of the bio-incubator's USP: the Fermentation Operations facility. Prof. Khasa briefly explained the fermenters available. The Council members were informed that the fermenters ranged over 3 liters to 240 liters capacity, and thus allowed the development of process for testing at pilot scale as well as further scale up.
- Prof. Y P Khasa also added that the BioNEST-UDSC is the only bio-incubator in the Delhi-NCR having the entire range of fermenters, with the capabilities of storing all data from the fermenter runs, an important feature from the industry point of view.
- Prof Khare also suggested to inform BIG Awardees whose projects require fermenter use, of the fermenter facilities available at BioNEST-UDSC
- All members were very appreciative of the efforts of the BioNEST Team in organizing and setting up the facilities at BioNEST-UDSC.

6. Discussion on the future of BioNEST-UDSC:

An extensive discussion was held on the future of BioNEST-UDSC.

- Prof. Saha briefed the Council members regarding the current mode of functioning of BioNEST-UDSC. The Council members were apprised that the BioNEST was presently being managed as a project funded by BIRAC, that had initially been funded for three years, from July 2020 to July 2023. The project was further extended by BIRAC for two years, upto July 2025.
- **Considering the future beyond that, based on BIRAC's mandate, BioNEST-UDSC would have to be managed as either a Society or a Section 8 company.**
- The Council members discussed at length on this.

Suman Saha

Ch

Manoj

Debasim Marady

Sanjay
Koy



BioNEST-UDSC

Fostering Innovations
University of Delhi South Campus



- The Council members noted that a Section 8 company structure would have greater transparency in operations, and would help BioNEST-UDSC gain greater credibility as a central government-approved establishment.
 - It was felt that the structure of a Section 8 company was preferable as this would also qualify BioNEST-UDSC for grants and subsidies from the government, while a Society structure would not support this.
 - Prof. Burma suggested that the direction forward is to establish BioNEST-UDSC as a Section 8 company. Prof. Burma also briefed the Council members that the University of Delhi had recently started encouraging the establishment of Section 8 companies for promoting activities related to science, technology, and commerce. Prof. Saha apprised the members that at a meeting with the Vice Chancellor of the University of Delhi, the Honorable Vice Chancellor had indicated his support for establishing incubators in the University, and had also expressed his support for the establishment of Section 8 companies in the University.
 - Prof. Khare, who has considerable experience in the matter through the Section 8 companies set up at IIT, Delhi (SATHI Foundation, IIT Delhi and FITT-IITD), explained the various aspects involved in managing a Section 8 company. Prof. Khare also suggested the BioNEST Team get in touch with the FITT Team to seek guidance on how to make the facility self-sustainable. Prof. Mukhopadhyay and Prof. Mohanty were also supportive of the idea of BioNEST-UDSC being established as a Section 8 company. Prof. Mohanty expressed confidence in the sustainability of the venture, supported by prime location of the Facility, the strong fermentation and allied facilities in addition to other instrumentation, and available pool of academically strong mentors.
7. After lengthy discussions, the Advisory Council proposed that the BioNEST Team work towards establishing BioNEST-UDSC as a Section 8 company, after seeking the necessary approvals from the Competent Authority.
 8. The External Experts were very appreciative of the manner in which the bio-incubator had been set up and was being managed, and congratulated the BioNEST team on the progress made since its inception.
 9. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks from Prof. Saha, who thanked the Chairman as well as External Experts for finding the time to join the meeting and spend so much time giving their inputs for the smooth operations and sustainability of BioNEST-UDSC.

Prof. Pradeep Burma, Department of Genetics, UDSC (Chairman)

Dr Debasisa Mohanty, Director, National Institute of Immunology, Delhi (External Expert)

Prof. S.K. Khare, Department of Chemistry, IIT Delhi (External Expert)

Prof. Chinmay K. Mukhopadhyay, SCMM, JNU, Delhi (External Expert)

Prof. Alo Nag, Department of Biochemistry, UDSC (Member, Advisory Council)

Prof Rani Gupta, Department of Microbiology, UDSC (Member, Advisory Council)

Prof Swati Saha, Department of Microbiology (Member Secretary, Coordinator, BioNEST-UDSC)

Prof Rajeev Kaul, Department of Microbiology (Special Invitee, Nodal Officer, BioNEST - UDSC)

Prof. Y.P. Khata, Department of Microbiology (Special Invitee, Nodal Officer, BioNEST - UDSC)