

Bill Summary

The Regional Centre for Biotechnology Bill, 2016

- The Regional Centre for Biotechnology Bill, 2016 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan, on March 15, 2016.
- India had entered into an agreement in 2006 with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) regarding establishment of the Regional Centre for Biotechnology Training and Education in India to serve the member countries of UNESCO. In light of this agreement, the central government set up the Regional Centre for Biotechnology Training and Education in Faridabad, Haryana through an executive order in 2009. The Bill seeks to provide legislative backing to the Regional Centre. It also confers upon it the status of an institution of national importance. An institution of national importance is an institute which imparts scientific or technical education, and is empowered to grant degrees.
- **Objectives:** The Bill states that the objectives of the Regional Centre will include: (i) disseminating knowledge by providing teaching and research facilities in biotechnology and related fields, (ii) facilitating transfer of technology and knowledge in the SAARC region and generally Asia, (iii) creating a hub of biotechnology expertise, and (iv) promoting cooperation at the international level.
- **Powers of the Regional Centre:** The powers of the Regional Centre will include: (i) providing masters and doctoral degrees, and post-graduate diplomas in biotechnology and related subjects (eg. medical, agricultural and engineering sciences), (ii) instituting academic positions, like professorships, and appointing persons to such positions, (iii) determining standards of admission to the Regional Centre, and (iv) fixing and receiving fees.
- **Authorities of the Regional Centre:** The Regional Centre will have authorities responsible for its administration and functioning including: (i) the Board of Governors, (ii) the Programme Advisory Committee, (iii) the Executive Committee, (iv) the Finance Committee, etc.
- **Board of Governors:** The Board will be the apex body of the Regional Centre responsible for: (i) approving the annual plan and budget of the institute, (ii) reviewing its policies and programmes, (iii) approving organisational structure, (iv) carrying out the projects relevant to the institute, (v) expanding fund raising capabilities, etc. The Board will have seven members: (i) the Secretary with the Department of Biotechnology as Chairperson, (ii) three scientists nominated by the central government (not below the rank of Joint Secretary or equivalent rank), and (iii) three representatives of UNESCO.
- **Programme Advisory Committee:** The Programme Advisory Committee will be the principal academic body of the Regional Centre. It will be responsible for: (i) making recommendations on planning education, training and research activities, (ii) reviewing annually the programmes of the Regional Centre, (iii) publishing reports on scientific and technical issues referred to it by the Board, etc. It will comprise 14 members (including nominees of the Board, central government and UNESCO).
- **Executive and Finance Committees:** The Executive Committee will be in charge of implementing policies and decisions of the Board. The Finance Committee will review finances and accounts of the Regional Centre, and make recommendations to the Board. The constitution and powers of these committees will be specified by the Board.
- **Review of functioning:** The Regional Centre's functioning will be reviewed once in every four years by persons appointed by the central government.
- **Fund:** The Regional Centre will maintain a Fund to meet its expenses (including fees and allowances paid to members of the Board and various committees and expenses incurred in carrying out its functions). The Fund will include: (i) monies provided by the central government, (ii) fees received by the Regional Centre, and (iii) grants, gifts, donations, etc. received.

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