BRCP Phase III: the Cabinet's Approval and the July 2026 Launch

Science and technology / governance | News context: the PIB release on the launch of Phase III of the Biomedical Research Career Programme (BRCP), 15 July 2026 | Published: 18 October 2026

Background and context

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and Britain's Wellcome Trust started this programme in 2008-09 through a special purpose vehicle (SPV) called the DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance. According to PIB's Cabinet release of 1 October 2025, its Phase II began in 2018-19. The programme's basic purpose is to give fellowships to scientists doing world-class biomedical research while staying in India.

Why in the News

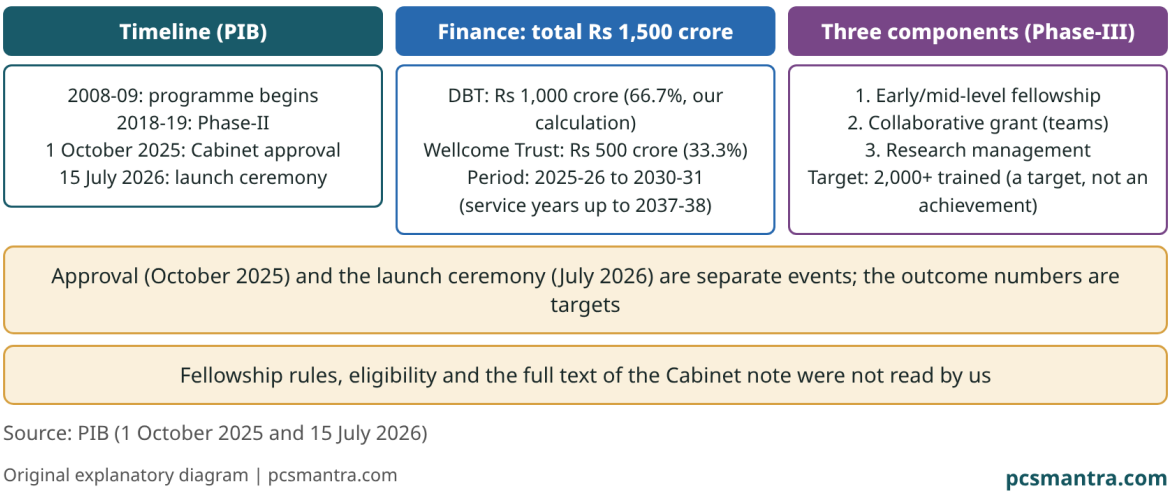
According to PIB's release of 15 July 2026, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dr Jitendra Singh launched Phase III. The total outlay was stated to be ₹1,500 crore: ₹1,000 crore from DBT and ₹500 crore from the Wellcome Trust. The Cabinet's approval is recorded earlier, on 1 October 2025, on PIB; the July 2026 event was a launch ceremony, not a new approval.

The core concept: a career programme, fellowships and research management

BRCP is not just a grant for research projects; it is support built around the stages of a scientist's career. According to the Cabinet release, Phase III proposes three components: early and intermediate research fellowships (in the basic, clinical and public-health areas), a collaborative grant programme (Career Development Grants, and Catalyst Collaborative Grants for teams of 2-3 investigators) and a research-management programme. Emphasis on mentorship, networking and public engagement is also stated.

Biomedical Research Career Programme

Phase-III: Rs 1,500 crore DBT-Wellcome partnership



Key facts and figures

Approval and launch (PIB)	**Cabinet approval: 1 October 2025. Phase III's period: 2025-26 to 2030-31, plus six more years from 2031-32 to 2037-38 to service fellowships and grants approved by 2030-31. The launch ceremony: 15 July 2026.**
The funding (PIB)	Total cost ₹1,500 crore: DBT ₹1,000 crore and the Wellcome Trust ₹500 crore. That makes DBT's share two-thirds and Wellcome's one-third (our calculation; it matches the figures in both releases).
Expected outcomes (Cabinet release)	Training of more than 2,000 students and postdoctoral fellows; a 10-15 per cent rise in support to women; 25-30 per cent of collaborative programmes reaching TRL4 or above; and the expansion of activities to tier-2/3 locations. These are targets set at approval, not achievements.
The record so far (PIB, July 2026)	According to the release, since 2008 the programme has supported biomedical research by more than 500 researchers across more than 200 institutions. These are government claims; the release cites no independent evaluation.

Checking the dates and the claims

Approval versus launch: the October 2025 Cabinet release also says DBT has "started" Phase III, while the July 2026 release speaks of the "launch" on 15 July. We treat the two as separate events: the approval on 1 October 2025 and the ceremony on 15 July 2026. The wording of the two releases is not exactly the same, so we do not give a single date for when it "started".

The economic figures: quoting the minister, the release says India's bioeconomy grew from 10 billion dollars in 2014 to over 195 billion dollars in 2025, is estimated to reach 300 billion dollars by 2030, and that there are about 12,000 biotech start-ups. These are the minister's statements; we have not independently cross-checked them, and a causal link to BRCP's outcomes is not established.

Our calculation: 1,000 / 1,500 is about 66.7 per cent and 500 / 1,500 about 33.3 per cent. This is our arithmetic; the release gives no percentage.

The question of the years already running: Phase III is counted from 2025-26, but the launch came in July 2026. The releases do not say whether new fellowships were given in 2025-26; so we make no such claim.

Why it matters: investing in research talent and international partnership

The career-stage approach: the fellowships are stated separately for early and intermediate researchers, and research management is also treated as a component. This shows the research system is adding not only laboratory scientists but managers and communicators too (the July 2026 release also counts science communicators and research managers).

A public-private partnership: according to the release, one-third of the funding comes from the philanthropic Wellcome Trust. The minister also called for more philanthropy and industry participation. This partnership model gives long-term continuity, but also raises the question of dependence on a foreign donor; the releases do not discuss this.

Regional inequality: according to the approval release, the aim is to reduce regional inequality and reach tier-2/3 locations. No state-wise number or target table for this is given in the release.

Challenges, and what we have not read

Measurement and independent evaluation: the baseline figures and measurement method for the expected outcomes (2,000 trained, a 10-15 per cent rise for women, 25-30 per cent TRL4+) are not in the releases. We have not read independent evaluations of the earlier phases.

The funding split and the period: the total ₹1,500 crore is for the service period from 2025-26 to 2037-38; no year-by-year split appears in the releases. So we give no estimate of annual spending.

What we have not read: we read both PIB releases in full. We have not read the DBT or India Alliance fellowship rules, eligibility, award amounts, application dates or the full text of the Cabinet note, so we make no claims on those.

Way Forward

Take this as based on the government releases on the Cabinet approval of 1 October 2025 and the launch ceremony of 15 July 2026. Real progress on targets like trained researchers and support for women will be decided only by official figures to come.

Distinguishing the concepts

Keep four things separate: (1) the Cabinet's approval and the launch ceremony; (2) targets and achievements; (3) government claims and independent evaluation; (4) PIB's figures and our calculations.

Mains perspective

GS-III: science and technology, biotechnology and research funding; GS-II: international partnership and governance.

UPSC CSE Mains Style: Original Practice Question

Assess the role of Phase III of the DBT-Wellcome Trust Research Career Programme in building biomedical research capacity in India. Discuss its components, funding arrangement and the challenges of measuring success.

(Answer in 150 words) | 10 marks

Answer Outline

Introduction: The programme's history and Phase III.

Main Body: The components: fellowships, collaborative grants, research management; funding and the partnership; the expected outcomes and the limits of their measurement; regional inequality; the approval-versus-launch distinction.

Conclusion: Do not treat the approval and launch of Phase III as a proven improvement in research capacity; judge the outcomes of fellowships, collaboration, research management and regional access together with the financing arrangement and the limits of measurement.

Sources

- PIB, launch of BRCP Phase III (15 July 2026)
- PIB, the Cabinet's approval of BRCP Phase III (1 October 2025)

Sources: both PIB releases were read in full. The fellowship rules, the India Alliance pages and the Cabinet note's text were not read.

Remember: the Cabinet's approval came on 1 October 2025 and the launch ceremony on 15 July 2026; of the ₹1,500 crore, DBT gives ₹1,000 crore and the Wellcome Trust ₹500 crore. The outcome targets are still targets, not achievements.