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MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MoU)

Between

NORTH EASTERN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (NEST) CLUSTER of IIT GUWAHATI

and

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SIKKIM

NORTH EASTERN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (NEST) CLUSTER

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SIKKIM

1. Preamble

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is entered into on this tenth day of August, 2026,
BETWEEN
North Eastern Science & Technology (NEST) Cluster, registered as Section 8 company and is R&D intervened cluster of Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati. It is established under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Government of India, located at Research Park, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, 781039, Assam, India, represented by its Project Director/ Head, Prof. Vimal Katiyar, duly authorized, hereinafter referred to as **"Hub Institute"**.

AND

National Institute of Technology Sikkim (NIT Sikkim), having its registered office at Ravangla, Namchi, Sikkim 737139, represented by its Director, Professor Mahesh Chandra Govil, duly authorized, hereinafter referred to as "**Spoke Institute**".
The Hub and Spoke Institutes shall hereinafter be collectively referred to as the "**Parties**".

2. Background

The North Eastern Science & Technology (NEST) Cluster is a transformative initiative dedicated to accelerating research, innovation, and skill development in the North Eastern Region of India. Envisioned as a Section-8, not-for-profit company, the cluster operates through a hub-and-spoke model involving premier academic institutions, industries, government agencies, and start-ups across all eight north-eastern states.

The Spoke Institutes are academic/ research/ technical institutions with regional presence and domain expertise in the thematic areas of Grassroots technologies, AI and semiconductors, Bamboo based technologies and Biodegradable Plastics; capable of supporting outreach, incubation, skill development and technology deployment.

The Parties intend to collaborate under a Hub-and-Spoke Model to enable decentralized innovation, capacity building and industry linkage.

3. Objectives

The Parties agree to collaborate under the following Objectives:

a. Establish a collaborative framework for technology development and deployment
b. Promote start-up incubation and entrepreneurship
c. Facilitate skill development and capacity building programs
d. Strengthen regional outreach
e. Support MSME ecosystem development and cluster-based industrialization

4. Scope of collaboration

The collaboration shall include but not be limited to:

4.1. Technology Development and Transfer

- Joint R&D projects in identified priority sectors (e.g. Bamboo, Bioplastics, AI, semiconductors etc.) and for development of the North Eastern Region & any other relevant mutually agreed
- Pilot demonstrations and field implementation
- Technology validation and commercialization support

4.2. Incubation and Start-up Support

- Identification and nurturing of start-ups at the Spoke level
- Mentorship, business development and investor connect
- Facilitation of hub-mediated incubation support

4.3. Skill Development and Training

- Conduct of training programs, workshops and short-term courses as mentioned in the Terms of Reference document
- Curriculum co-development aligned with industry needs
- Conduct of Certification programs

4.4. Outreach and Networking

- Awareness programs, stakeholder consultations and technology showcases
- Industry engagement and partnership development
- Support in organizing regional/ national/ international events

4.5. Infrastructure and Facility sharing

- Access to laboratories, pilot plants and testing facilities that are associated with the NEST Cluster on taking prior written permission
- Joint establishment of specialized labs (on Board approval and as per NEST Guidelines)

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. Responsibilities of Hub:

- Provide strategic direction and overall coordination
- Act as a knowledge and technology repository
- Facilitate funding support and resource mobilization (as per NEST Guidelines)
- Provide technical expertise, mentoring and incubation support
- Monitor and evaluate performance of Spoke Institutes
- Enable regional, national and international collaborations

5.2. Responsibilities of the Spoke Institute:

- Act as a regional implementation partner
- Identify local needs, opportunities and beneficiaries
- Support start-up scouting and incubation activities
- Conduct training, outreach and field-level implementation
- Submit periodic reports to the Hub

6. Governance Structure

A Steering Committee shall be constituted with representatives from both Parties and the Hub Executive team shall help the Spoke Institute in carrying out the aforementioned activities. Regular Review meetings shall be held for monitoring the progress.

7. Funding and Financial Arrangements

The Hub shall act as the nodal agency for fund disbursement as per the Terms of Reference. The Spoke institute shall utilize the funds as per the approved proposal and submit utilization certificates and bills.

8. Intellectual Property Rights

- IPR generated under joint activities shall be jointly owned, unless otherwise agreed
- Commercialization terms shall be mutually decided on a case-by-case basis
- Proper acknowledgement of both parties shall be ensured.

9. Confidentiality

Both parties agree to maintain confidentiality of proprietary information, data and research outputs, unless disclosure is required by law or mutually agreed upon.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance shall be evaluated based on the number of people trained from the NER; number of start-ups incubated and number of technologies developed/ transferred. Periodic reporting of activities is necessary.

11. Duration and Termination

This MoU shall become effective from the date of execution as signed by both parties and continue in effect till 5 Years from the date of signing unless terminated earlier by either party upon a prior notice to the other. Each party shall have the right to terminate the MoU by giving 3 (three) months' notice in writing to the other party at any time. Termination by either side shall not affect any prior obligation, project, or activity already in progress. Notwithstanding the termination, all the rights and obligations accrued till the effective date of termination shall be binding on the parties.

12. Dispute Resolution

Any dispute arising out of the MoU shall be resolved amicably through mutual discussions. Failing which, it shall be subject to the jurisdiction of courts in Guwahati, Assam.

13. Amendments

This MoU may be amended only through a written agreement signed by both parties. It is hereby agreed that this signed MoU can be put in the public domain by both the parties.

14. Force Majeure

Neither Party shall be held liable for failure to perform obligations due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control.

Signatories

This MoU shall enter into force on the latest date of signing by qualified representatives such as Director/ CEO / Point of Contact/ Coordinating Person of Concerned institutions and is executed in duplicate, with each party retaining one original copy.

For NEST Cluster, IIT Guwahati

[Name] VIMAL KATIYAR

[Designation] Director, NEST Cluster

Date: 10/8/26

For Spoke Institute

[Dr. Achintesh N. Biswas]

[Dean, Alumni, Industry and International Relations]

Date: 10-08-2026

Terms of Reference (ToR) for NEST Spoke Institutions

between NEST Cluster, IIT Guwahati and NIT Sikkim

1. Background

The NEST Cluster, a Section 8 Company with its hub at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, aims to establish a collaborative network of partnering institutions across the North Eastern Region to support research, innovation, outreach, capacity building and stakeholder engagement.

Under this initiative, selected partner institutions will function as Spoke Institutions as per DPR and host a NEST Spoke Office to facilitate the implementation of cluster activities at the regional level. The spoke institutions will contribute to strengthening the innovation ecosystem by supporting research collaborations, industry engagement, stakeholder training programs, and technology dissemination, aligned with the objectives of the NEST Cluster.

2. Objective of the Spoke Office

The NEST Spoke Office established at the partner institution shall serve as a regional coordination and facilitation centre for NEST Cluster activities. The key objectives include:

- Facilitating regional coordination and outreach activities of the NEST Cluster
- Supporting collaborative research and innovation initiatives
- Organizing workshops, training programmes, start-up handholding, stakeholder consultations and awareness events
- Promoting interaction among academia, industry, start-ups, government agencies and other stakeholders
- Supporting demonstration, dissemination and adoption of technologies developed under the NEST Cluster.
- Strengthening regional capacity building aligned with the goals of the NEST Cluster

3. Infrastructure Support for Spoke Office

Subject to project-based applicable financial norms, the NEST Cluster may provide one-time infrastructure support of up to Rs. 5,00,000/- for establishing the NEST Spoke Office at the partner institution as reimbursement. However, office space will be provided at Spoke Institute. This support may be utilized for the procurement and establishment of essential office infrastructure, including but not limited to:

- Workstations/ desktop computers
- Display systems
- Office peripherals and accessories
- Printer/ Scanner
- Office furniture such as desks, chairs and storage units (for training a group of 30 participants)
- Minor office renovation and setup-related expenses required for operationalizing the NEST Spoke Office

All procurement shall be carried out in accordance with applicable financial and procurement rules of the project and host institution.

4. Ownership and Management of Assets

All infrastructure, equipment, furniture and other assets procured through funds provided under the NEST Cluster project shall remain the property of the NEST Cluster Foundation at IIT Guwahati. The Spoke Institution shall:

- Maintain a separate asset register for all equipment and infrastructure procured under the NEST Cluster.
- Ensure that all assets are used exclusively for activities related to the NEST Cluster.
- Ensure proper maintenance, security and responsible utilization of the assets.
- Not transfer, relocate, dispose of or repurpose the assets without prior written approval from the NEST Cluster Foundation, IIT Guwahati.

Upon completion or termination of the project, the NEST Cluster Foundation, IIT Guwahati shall reserve the right to determine the future ownership, relocation or continued utilization of the assets.

5. Operational and Contingency Support

Subject to project provisions and financial availability, the NEST Cluster may provide annual contingency support of up to Rs. 2,00,000/ year for operational requirements of the Spoke Office. This support may be utilized for:

- Office rent or space maintenance (if applicable)
- Part-time manpower or administrative assistance
- Office supplies and consumables
- Minor operational expenses related to coordination activities
- Local travel or stakeholder engagement activities associated with the NEST Cluster Foundation

All expenditures shall be incurred in accordance with approved financial guidelines and utilization norms.

6. Roles and Responsibilities of the Spoke Institution

The Spoke Institution shall undertake the following responsibilities:

- Provide suitable office space within its campus for establishing the NEST Spoke Office
- Nominate a Faculty Coordinator/ Nodal Officer/ Point of Contact to oversee and coordinate all NEST activities
- Facilitate the organization of workshops, meetings, training programs, outreach events and stakeholder interactions as per NEST Cluster proposed activities
- Support engagement with regional industries, start-ups, academic institutions and government agencies
- Ensure proper financial management, record keeping and asset maintenance related to project activities.
- Provide necessary administrative and institutional support for the successful implementation of NEST activities.

- Submit periodic activity reports, financial utilization reports and asset records to IIT Guwahati. The expenditure will be reimbursed against the submission of bills based on expression of interest.
- Spoke Institute should provide/engage a resource person on the thematic areas for intellectuals from the NEST Cluster.

7. Roles and Responsibilities of the Hub Institution (IIT Guwahati)

IIT Guwahati, as the Hub Institution, shall:

- Provide overall coordination, guidance and oversight for NEST Cluster activities.
- Facilitate financial support and resource allocation as per approved project provisions.
- Support to spoke for planning and implementation of research, innovation, training and outreach programs.
- Support technical guidance and facilitate collaboration among different spoke institutions. Submission of Regional Development related specific projects proposed and implementation jointly by Hub and spoke organizations
- Monitor and evaluate the progress and performance of activities conducted at the Spoke Offices.
- Issuing certificates for successful completion of the program in association with spokes.
- To execute a financial audit for the NEST Cluster.
- Repository of activities to BOG and possible approvals for execution of new program or agenda.

8. Branding, Communication and Visibility

All activities carried out under the NEST Spoke Office shall appropriately acknowledge the NEST Cluster and IIT Guwahati.
The Spoke Institution shall:

- Display NEST Cluster signage and branding at the spoke office location.
- Use the NEST Cluster logo and acknowledgement in events, reports, outreach material and publications related to the project.
- Ensure proper visibility of the NEST initiative in all stakeholder engagements conducted through the spoke office.

9. Monitoring, Documentation and Reporting

The Spoke Institution shall provide periodic documentation to IIT Guwahati including:

- Activity and progress reports
- Financial utilization statements
- Asset utilization and inventory records
- Documentation of workshops, training programs and outreach activities

IIT Guwahati or its authorized representatives may conduct periodic reviews or monitoring visits to assess the implementation and progress of the activities.

10. Duration of Engagement

The association of the Spoke Institution with the NEST Cluster shall remain valid for the duration specified in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or for the duration of the project, whichever is applicable. The performance and contributions of the Spoke Institution may be periodically reviewed by IIT Guwahati.

11. Termination and Reassignment

In case of:

- Non-compliance with project guidelines
- Misuse or mismanagement of funds or assets
- Failure to implement agreed activities

The NEST Cluster Foundation at IIT Guwahati reserves the right to terminate or suspend the collaboration after due notice. In such cases, IIT Guwahati may also decide to reallocate or recover assets procured under the project.

12. Formalization through Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The collaboration between IIT Guwahati and the Spoke Institution shall be formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between:

- Director, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati and
- Director, Spoke Institution

The MoU shall specify the scope of collaboration, financial provisions, roles and responsibilities, governance mechanisms and reporting requirements governing the partnership.

Signatories

This TOR shall enter into force on the latest date of signing by qualified representatives such as Director/ CEO / Point of Contact/ Coordinating Person of Concerned institutions and is executed in duplicate, with each party retaining one original copy.

For NEST Cluster, IIT Guwahati

[Name] VIMAL KATHAR

[Designation] Director, NEST Cluster

Date: 10/8/26

For Spoke Institute

[Dr. Achintesh N. Biswas]

[Dean Alumni, Industry and International relations]

Date: 10/08/2026