

## **DST launches nationwide exercise to map & boost Covid19 solutions with R&D, seed & scale up support**

Rising to the National Call to combat the public health crisis arising out of Covid19 pandemic, the Department of Science & Technology (DST) is synergising and consolidating the various activities carried out by the Ministry of S&T and its network of autonomous institutions and scientific bodies across the country.

The solutions and novel applications to address Covid19 pandemic related challenges are being taken up through a three pronged approach. These include (a) extensive mapping of solutions requiring R&D support, startups with viable products requiring facilitation and manufacturing support; (b) identification of market deployable products requiring seed support and (c) support for solutions already in market but requiring substantial scale up to augment their manufacturing infrastructure and capabilities.

The Science & Engineering Research Board (SERB), an autonomous institution of the DST has already sent out a call to invite proposals as part of special call under IRHPA (Intensification of Research in High Priority Area) scheme specifically designed for Covid-19 and related respiratory viral infections to ramp up national R&D efforts for new anti-virals, vaccines, and affordable diagnostic. The call which invites submissions by March 31, 2020 has garnered encouraging response from scientists across India.

The Technology Development Board (TDB), a Statutory of Body of Govt of India functioning under DST has issued a call for proposal to address protection and home-based respiratory interventions for Covid 19 patients. The call which has been invited by March 30, 2020 has evinced great interest. Nearly 190 companies have already registered with TDB offering solutions including diagnostic kits Covid 19, thermal scanners, AI & IOT based decision making support, spares/manufacturing of ventilators, manufacturing of mask and so on.

Sri Chitra Tirunal Institute of Medical Science and Technology (SCTIMST), Trivandrum, an autonomous institute of DST has already started building 8 different prototypes to address Covid19 health challenges. Also a startup under incubation at SCTIMST-TIMed, a DST supported incubator in the Institute is developing low cost AI enabled digital X-ray detector for screening Covid19 patients.

The National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board, DST has reached out to its strong network of over 150+ incubation centres across the country for mapping the novel innovations already under incubation to combat diseases like Covid19. An encouraging response from 165 startups with innovative solutions has been received from DST incubated startups all over the country. These solutions encompass preventive, diagnostics, assistive and curative fronts to combat the disease and are at various stages of startup journey. DST has also seed supported a Pune based Startup under incubation at Scitech Park, Univ. of Pune to augment the deployment of Airon Ioniser Machines at various hospitals in Maharashtra, for reducing the viral load in quarantine areas significantly.

DST has set up a “Covid19 Task Force” for mapping of technologies from R&D labs, academic institutions, startups and MSMEs. The capacity mapping group has representatives from DST, DBT, ICMR, MeitY, CSIR, AIM, MSME, Startup India and AICTE. The aim is

to identify the most promising startups that are close to scaleup, who may need financial or other help or connects based on its projected demand to rapidly scaleup.

DST through the synergetic approach involving scientific and research institutions, researchers, scientists, incubators, startups and tech companies is geared to address the challenges arising out of Covid19 pandemic.