

Dr Harsh Vardhan lauds the efforts of CSIR scientists against COVID-19

By India Science Wire

Twitter handle: @indianscinews

New Delhi, May 4 (India Science Wire): “All scientists and institutions should prioritise the requirements of the time and also contribute in finding quick and deployable solutions”, said Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences and Health and Family Welfare. He was addressing scientists at a review meeting on the initiatives of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) towards mitigation of COVID-19 in the country.

Dr Shekhar C. Mande, DG, CSIR, apprised the Minister that CSIR has mounted a coordinated strategy involving all 38 CSIR labs and is working in close coordination with industry and other agencies for the implementation of interventions and technologies at the ground level. CSIR has devised five verticals - Digital and Molecular Surveillance; Rapid and Economical Diagnostics; New Drugs / Repurposing of Drugs/Vaccines; Hospital Assistive Devices and Personal protection equipment (PPEs); Supply Chain and Logistics Support Systems – to work on and develop requisite S&T-based solutions to combat COVID-19. The Directors coordinating the activities of these verticals reported the significant developments in each of them.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan appreciated CSIR for submitting 53 sequences of COVID-19 genomes to the Global Coronavirus Genome Database, Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID). “This is the result of a strong partnership between National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Delhi, and CSIR Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB), representing the largest submission of sequences, by far from India by any group. The joint NCDC-CSIR program will accelerate molecular epidemiology and viral surveillance efforts of India,” he said.

During the interaction, Dr Harsh Vardhan also acknowledged that all CSIR labs are rising to the occasion and have supported people by supplying sanitizers, masks, ready-to-eat food apart from developing S&T-based solutions. He noted that Indian regulators are working to speed up regulatory processes and CSIR-supported clinical trials of Mw-based Sepsivac by Industry has received approval for three clinical trials on Covid-19-affected patients.

Another major development involving CSIR is that for Remdesivir, a drug which has recently been approved by US-FDA for emergency use in COVID-19 patients. Synthesis of Key Starting Materials (KSMs) on kilo scale and gram-scale synthesis of Remdesivir have been achieved by CSIR-IICT (Indian Institute of Chemical Technology) and technology demonstration to Indian industry is going on. For Favipiravir, another promising drug for COVID-19, CSIR is working with the private sector for clinical trials and launch in India.

The Minister appreciated CSIR for coming up with quick solutions to the shortages faced in various hospital devices and PPEs. Especially noteworthy was a BiPAP ventilator that CSIR-NAL has come up with in a short span of 35 days, which is awaiting certification. CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) and MAF Clothing Pvt. Ltd. have jointly developed a

coverall and have received an order for 50,000 pieces from HLL and are gearing up to produce 30,000 pieces/day.

The Minister also released the Guidelines for Public Transport and Feeder Modes considering social distancing norms developed by CSIR-CRRI (Central Road Research Institute). Dr. Harsh Vardhan appreciated the efforts and said, “Post COVID-19, a new normal will develop in the society, setting new standards to live in a better way, in a scientific way which will eventually become Good Health Norms”.

DG CSIR, Dr Shekhar C. Mande; Director, CSIR-IGIB Dr. Anurag Agarwal; Director, CRRI, Dr. Satish Chandra; Director, CSIR-IIIM, Dr. Ram Vishwakarma; Director, CSIR-IIP (Indian Institute of Petroleum), Dr. Anjan Ray; and Director, NAL, Shri Jitendra Yadhav besides Directors of other CSIR labs across the country were present at the video-conference. (India Science Wire)

Keywords: COVID-19, CORONAVIRUS, CSIR