

India is poised to reboot the economy through S&T: Dr. Harsh Vardhan

By India Science Wire

New Delhi, May 11(India Science Wire): The Union Minister of Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, and Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said today that India's fight against the COVID-19 is moving fast ahead strongly and steadily. He was addressing a digital conference, RE-START – 'Reboot the Economy through Science, Technology and Research Translations', organized to celebrate the National Technology Day. The Conference was organized by the Technology Development Board (TDB), a statutory body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

While applauding the Ministry of Science and Technology's response to epidemics like COVID in the country, Dr. Harsh Vardhan emphasized that the S&T response reflects the collaborative spirit of the entire S&T ecosystem. "Indian government, academia, scientists, start-ups, entrepreneurs and industry have been working relentlessly to find solutions to combat this pandemic. We must appreciate the efforts of our scientists, our entrepreneurs and our institutions working to find quick and deployable solutions for COVID-19. New discoveries, industry partnerships, and enhanced research initiatives have thus been rapidly developed and adopted", said the minister.

"Within a short period of time, the nation has been able to mobilize a number of researchers to develop new testing kits, protective equipment, respiratory devices, etc.", he added.

The minister also apprised the audience about the 'COVID-19 Task Force' set up by the Government to map COVID-19-related technology capabilities. "Our Government has vigorously supported the 'Make in India' Programme. This has brought in scientific institutions and start-ups to develop the COVID-19 tests, masks, sanitizers, personal protective equipment (PPEs) and ventilators," he further added.

On the theme for the National Technology Day this year, Dr. Harsh Vardhan pointed out, "We need to mitigate the widespread economic impact and prepare for a stronger recovery using self-reliance as the new mantra. Thus, we look towards new opportunities to galvanize growth in the technological and industrial sector."

While delivering his special address, Dr. VK Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog, pointed out the importance of new-age technologies, medical and manufacturing technologies, etc. in boosting the economy as the world adjusts to the new normal.

Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, Professor K. Vijay Raghavan, pointed out how technology can change the way we live our lives and the way we do things in future, particularly so in the post-COVID era. He pointed out that this is an opportunity to gear up for the future that lies ahead, and a better-equipped R&D workforce and ecosystem will prepare India better for future challenges.

DST has stepped into its 50th year of existence. DST Secretary Professor Ashutosh Sharma, thus, underlined the significance of the National Technology Day in view of the challenges faced during these times of COVID-19. He further emphasized that the COVID-19 crisis had led R&D and technology

development to work in various modes. The private-public model has encouraged R&D to greater heights. Plausible translations, prototyping, start-ups, and industry have seen immense growth.

“Rebooting the economy requires new-age technologies, appropriate national missions, programmes and schemes to get into quick action. He added that wherever readymade solutions are not available, research and development needs to be more profound, relevant, speedy, impactful and strongly connected to industry. The lessons learnt now would continue to assist us in addressing the overarching challenges of the future—sustainable development, climate change, industry 4.0, anti-microbial resistance, etc., said Professor Sharma.

Dr. Saumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, World Health Organization, highlighted the steps taken internationally to combat the pandemic and the way forward. Dr. Swaminathan appreciated the way India has tackled the COVID-19 challenge. Mr. Chandrajit Banerjee, DG, CII; Mr. Vikram Kirloskar, President, CII, and Dr Neeraj Sharma, Secretary, TDB, were among those who participated in the inaugural session.

During this occasion, Dr. Harsh Vardhan also inaugurated a virtual exposition of companies whose technologies have been supported by TDB. Various organizations and companies showcased their products in the exposition through a digital B2B lounge.

The conference has hence brought together scientists, technocrats, government officials, diplomats, WHO officials, and dignitaries from national and international industry, research institutions and academic institutions on a single platform to share their insights on the role played by S&T to combat this global healthcare crisis and to find solutions for the same.

The conference will have technical sessions on ‘Medicines & Medical Technologies’; ‘Advanced Materials – New Technology Horizons’, ‘Advanced Manufacturing Technologies for Sustainable Future & Global Innovation’ and ‘Technology Alliance for Global Economic Leadership’. (India Science Wire)

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