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Health Ministry reviews CSIR's steps to beat COVID-19

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Calls upon all scientific departments to develop enhanced synergy for quicker and better results



The Minister for Science &Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan reviewed through video-conferencing the various initiatives CSIR has taken up in mitigation of Covid-19 in the country.

DG CSIR Dr Shekhar C Mande apprised the Minister that CSIR has mounted a coordinated strategy involving all 38 CSIR labs and working in close coordination with industry and other agencies for implementation of the 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 PPEs; Supply Chain and Logistics Support Systems in order to develop requisite S&T based solutions to combat Covid19. Significant developments in each of the five verticals, were presented by the Vertical Coordinating Directors.

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 exhorted the scientific departments, “to develop enhanced synergy and good quality coordination for quicker and better results. All Scientists and institutions should prioritise the requirements of the time and also contribute in finding quick and deployable solutions.” “I am happy to see the enthusiasm of CSIR scientists and that CSIR has made good progress since the last review”, he said. He said affordability factor of various drugs, vaccines and other diagnostic & therapeutic equipment should also be considered.

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.

Dr Harsh Vardhan noted that Indian regulators are working to speed up regulatory process and CSIR supported clinical trials of Mw based Sepsivac by Industry has received approval for three clinical trials on Covid-19 affected patients and may offer relief to them.

Another major development from the CSIR efforts is that for Remdesivir, a drug which has recently been approved by US-FDA for emergency use in Covid19 patients, synthesis of Key Starting Materials (KSMs) on kilo scale and gram scale synthesis of Remdesivir has 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 Covid19, CSIR is working with private sector for clinical trials and launch in India.

CSIR’s efforts in coming up with quick solutions to the shortages faced in various hospital devices and PPEs was also appreciated by the Minister. Especially noteworthy was that CSIR-NAL has come up with a BiPAP ventilator in a very short span of 35 days and is awaiting certification. CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) & MAFL have jointly developed a coverall and have received an order of 50,000 pieces from HLL and are gearing up to produce 30,000 pieces/day.