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Govt unveils Drug Discovery Hackathon 2020

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â??This Hackathon will help India establish new model for expediting drug discovery processâ?: Prof K. VijayRaghavan



The Union Government has launched Drug Discovery Hackathon 2020. This is a joint initiative of MHRD's Innovation Cell (MIC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and supported by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), MyGov as well as private players.

This Hackathon is first of its kind National initiative for supporting drug discovery process and will see participation from professionals, faculty, researchers and students from varied fields like Computer Science, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Medical Sciences, Basic Sciences and Biotechnology.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister for S&T said, "We need to establish the culture of Computational Drug Discovery in our country. In this initiative, MHRD's Innovation cell and AICTE will focus on identifying potential drug molecules through the Hackathon while CSIR will take these identified molecules forward for synthesis and laboratory testing for efficacy, toxicity, sensitivity and specificity."

Pointing out that drug discovery is a complex, expensive, arduous and time-consuming process, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said, "While we pursue clinical trials of few repurposed drugs for COVID-19, as they are faster and can quickly be launched, it is also important that we find other suitable repurposed drugs while at the same time continue working on new drug discovery to develop specific drugs against COVID-19".

He added, "in-silico drug discovery which utilizes Computational methods such as Machine Learning (ML), AI and Big Data will help in accelerating this process".

Prof K. VijayRaghavan, PSA, Govt. of India said, "I wish to thank MHRD, AICTE and CSIR and all our partners for supporting this Hackathon which will help India establish new model for expediting drug discovery process. The Hackathon consists of challenges that are posted as problem statements and, are based on specific drug discovery topics which, are open to the participants to solve. It will have three phases of three months each and the whole exercise is to be completed by April-May 2021. At the end of each phase, successful teams will be rewarded. The 'lead' compounds identified at the end of phase 3 will be taken forward for experimental level at CSIR and other interested organizations."