

Azad presents ICMR Awards to 51 scientists

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The union minister of health and family welfare, Ghulam Nabi Azad recently presented the ICMR Awards to 51 outstanding clinical and biomedical scientists for the years 2009 and 2010 for their work in communicable and non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health and various other medical and biomedical fields. The JALMA Trust Fund Oration award for 2007 has also been presented this year.

While 9 Awardees are from PGI, Chandigarh, 7 from ICMR Institutions, 5 Awardees are from AIIMS and 3 each from DRDO and KGMU, Lucknow, 2 each from NIMHANS, Bangalore, CSIR and Sri Chitra Thirunal Institute of Medical Sciences, Trivandrum and the remaining 18 belong to other Institutions. The ICMR Awards are bestowed based on the quality of knowledge generated, as judged by peers in the scientific field.

Speaking at the function, Azad expressed happiness that a good number of the awardees are women scientists. The Health Minister stated that India has been producing excellent human resource in the health field. Applauding the work of the scientists, he said that never before so many projects were taken up and so much research done as has been done in last four years. India produces human resources in the health arena not only for the country's needs, but also for many other countries.

Recently at the SEARO meeting in Delhi, the initiatives of Health ministry were appreciated by the Director General of WHO, Dr Margaret Chan, the Minister noted. Azad said that the human resource we produce is being shared with other countries. More than 81,000 doctors/ specialists/ super specialists in USA and more than 75,000 doctors/ specialists/ super specialists in the UK are of Indian origin, he stated.

The Health Minister said that the Department of Health Research (DHR) has launched several innovative schemes to expand the research base both in terms of infra-structure and human resource. He stated that during this year itself, DHR has rolled out three new schemes. These schemes aim to establish Multi-disciplinary Research Units in Medical Colleges to considerably strengthen the fight against non-communicable diseases; to establish a network of virology laboratories in all

government medical colleges as well as national institutions; and establishment of Model Rural Health Research Units in which ICMR Institutions, State Medical Colleges and State Health Departments will work together and have seamless transfer of modern yet affordable technology for the benefit of rural populace.

Highlighting the progress under these three schemes Shri Azad said that in 35 Government medical colleges Multi-disciplinary Research Units will be established in the current year, of which 21 have already been approved. Azad said that 16 new bio-safety laboratories for working on viral diseases and TB have been established during last three years and India now has more than 20 such laboratories. To enhance the capacity for control of outbreaks and other serious viral diseases, the infrastructure for diagnosis and research on viral diseases will be created or strengthened in 160 government medical colleges. Five Model Rural Health Research Units have already been approved by the Department of Health Research. The Health Minister stated that last year a BSL IV laboratory, which is Asia's first active laboratory for Human Medicine was established at NIV, Pune to deal with most dangerous lethal infections like hemorrhagic fevers and agents of bioterrorism.

Shri Azad emphasized the work done by the Government in the field of Cancer and Mental Health. Central Government has approved funds for establishing 20 new stand-alone State Cancer Institutes, 23 new Tertiary Cancer Centres and strengthening of existing 27 Regional Cancer Care Centres, across the country. With this initiative, the country will have an additional 70 state of the art tertiary cancer centres in Government sector, when fully established.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched a programme to encourage development and introduction of affordable and indigenous technologies for public health applications. The country is indigenously developing testing strips for diabetes, work on which is in an advanced stage; along with methods of mosquito control and diagnostic tests for TB, Lung fluke, Dengue, several other infections and cancer. Shri Azad termed the progress as very satisfactory with work on 30 such technologies expected to be completed by 2014. He also stated that research on liver diseases is extremely important considering the enormity of liver diseases of both infectious and non-infectious varieties in India.

The Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Shri A.H. Khan Choudhary congratulated all the awardees on their outstanding work in the field of research. He said that ICMR is doing a good work and it will go a long way to stimulate young researchers but we need to have more international collaboration in areas which are not fully developed. Shri Choudhary hoped that these programs will make scientists and teachers more globally competitive in the field of research.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research. It is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world. The Council's research priorities are undertaken with a view to reduce the total burden of disease and to promote health and well-being of the population.

Recognizing the contribution made by the biomedical scientists in various spheres of research, the ICMR has instituted various awards and prizes. ICMR started the tradition of honouring biomedical-scientists in 1953; beginning with "Basanti Devi Amir Chand Award" for senior scientists and "Shakuntala Amir Chand Award" for young scientists, and it is the 60th ICMR Awards function in honour of scientists. The awards recognize the contribution of young scientists as well as those who work in the underdeveloped parts of the country.

Also present at the function were Sh Desiraju, Secretary, HFW, Shri Nilanjan Sanyal, Secretary, AYUSH, Dr. V M Katoch, DG, ICMR, Sh Jagdish Prasad, DG, Health services along with the awardees and other senior officers of the Ministry of health and family Welfare.