

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RESEARCH**

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1894
TO BE ANSWERED ON 4TH AUGUST, 2026**

HEALTH RESEARCH AND DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

1894. SHRI L. K. SUDHISH:

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government proposes to enhance investment in health research and disease surveillance infrastructure;
- (b) the present status of strengthening viral diagnostic laboratories, multidisciplinary research units and model rural health research units;
- (c) the steps taken to fill vacancies in research institutions under the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR); and
- (d) the budgetary allocation made for health research during 2026-27 and the expected outcomes?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(SHRI PRATAPRAO JADHAV)**

(a): In recent years Government has increased the budget in health research and disease surveillance infrastructure along with new programmes/initiatives to make research grants more competitive and accessible. It has undertaken measures to broaden and strengthen the health-research funding ecosystem. Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has rationalised and expanded its intramural and extramural grant architecture so that funding support is calibrated to the scale, maturity, risk and translational stage of a research proposal. The current structure includes Small or ANVESHAN Grants of up to ₹2 crore, Intermediate or NISCHAYAK ANVESHAN Grants ranging from ₹2 crore to ₹8 crore, the First-in-the-World Challenge with stage-linked support of up to ₹8 crore, and Centres for Advanced Research with support of up to ₹15 crore. These instruments support investigator-initiated research, proof-of-concept studies, validation of interventions, high-risk and high-reward innovation, multidisciplinary research and advanced research programmes.

The Government has also approved the continuation of the Central Sector Scheme "Setting up and Strengthening of Nation-wide Network of Laboratories for Managing Epidemics and National Calamities" during the 16th Finance Commission period (2026-27 to 2030-31) with a total financial outlay of Rs.732.304 crore which is substantial rise in investment from Rs. 324.69 crore outlay of the 15th finance commission period (2021-22 to 2025-26). The scheme, also known as Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDL) scheme, has been reintroduced with several new components, including Infectious Disease Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (IRDLs) covering other pathogens like bacteria, fungi and parasites; standardized syndromic surveillance; External Quality Assessment (EQA) and laboratory accreditation; specialized Resource Centres, and contingency support for outbreak investigations.

(b): Under the VRDL Scheme, a nationwide network of 167 VRDLs, comprising 11 Regional, 27 State and 129 Medical College & Research Institute-level laboratories, has been established across 27 States and 5 Union Territories. The laboratories strengthen diagnostic capacity, disease surveillance, outbreak investigation and response, and generation of epidemiological data.

As far as Multidisciplinary Research Units (MRU) and Model Rural Health Research Units (MRHRU) schemes are concerned, till date, 123 MRUs have been established across the country in Medical Colleges/Research Institutes, including 5 MRUs in Private Medical Colleges. A total of 39 MRHRUs across 26 states and 4 Union Territories have been established across the country to strengthen rural health research. Further, 8 MRUs were upgraded to Centres of Research Excellence (CoRE) by injecting additional funds, manpower and laboratory equipment. CoREs are capable of conducting high quality, cutting-edge research.

(c): ICMR has a total sanctioned strength of 923 scientific posts out of which 778 scientists are already in position and process of centralized recruitment has been initiated for filling up 49 scientist posts. Frequent recruitment drives are undertaken to fill up the vacancies.

(d): The budgetary allocation for DHR has increased over 5 times - from ₹ 932.00 crore in 2014-15 (RE) to ₹ 4,821.21 crore in 2026-27 (BE). There has been a rise of approximately 24 percent in Budgetary allocation in 2026-27 over the Revised Estimates for 2025-26 of ₹3,900.69 crore, indicating strong commitment of Union Government towards strengthening health research in the country. ICMR has informed that over 2,500 research projects undertaken by it are focused on areas such as: Indigenous development of medical devices and diagnostics; development of frontier technologies; Pandemic preparedness; research to address neonatal mortality, mental health, anemia, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Cancer, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and Universal Health Coverage (UHC); AI-based tools for screening and diagnosis of cancer, AMR, chronic pain, and mental health disorders and Strengthening clinical trials infrastructure and capacity among others.
