

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1009
TO BE ANSWERED ON 3rd DECEMBER, 2021**

PANDEMIC RESEARCH

1009. SHRI S. JAGATHRAKSHAKAN:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken any steps to increase funding and strengthen research on pandemic;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

ANSWER

**THE HON'BLE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(DR. BHARTI PRAVEEN PAWAR)**

(a) to (c):A new Scheme "Prime Minister Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)" has been approved with an outlay of Rs.1347.00 crore for Department of Health Research/Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) towards Bio-security preparedness and Strengthening Pandemic Research and Multi - Sector National Institutions and Platform for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.

Major activities approved under the initiative include setting up of 9 BSL-3 Labs; Regional Research Platform of the South East Asia Region Countries; 4 Zonal National Institutes of Virology (NIVs); Division for Research on Disease Elimination Sciences & Health at National Aids Research Institute (NARI), Pune; strengthening already functional Viral Research & Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDLs) and support for various other research institutes/Centres to strengthen research on pandemic.

Besides, the Department of Science and Technology has taken several steps to strengthen research on pandemic. The initiatives include:

- (i) A special call on scientifically identifying relevant yoga and meditation practices for immunity boosting, respiratory toning and stress reduction

- (ii) Formation and support to a group across several IITs and Artificial Intelligence (AI) startups to find Artificial Intelligence solutions to COVID-19 diagnostics and predictions.
- (iii) Linked with technology industry such as International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), NVIDIA etc who have agreed to provide resources such as supercomputing time and software stacks pro bono for COVID research.
- (iv) Activation of relevant Department of Science and Technology (DST) autonomous institutions in providing solutions-- a particularly successful institute has been Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute of Medical Science and Technology which has already come up with over 10 effective products, several of which are of a breakthrough nature and are being commercialized rapidly.
- (v) Centre for Augmenting War with COVID-19 Health Crisis (CAWACH) Program of DST for supporting COVID19 startup solutions from all over the country.
- (vi) A total of 94 projects with total outlay of Rs. 20.56 crore were sanctioned by Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB).

Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is also implementing two kinds of the projects for the purpose. Under New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative (NMITLI) Scheme's special call for COVID Projects, 6 projects are being implemented. CSIR had given special call to CSIR labs inviting projects related to coronavirus. In this category, 47 projects were supported. An amount of Rs.7299.244/- Lakhs has been allocated for these projects.

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), is supporting the implementation of two key programmes, the National Biopharma Mission (NBM) and the Ind-CEPI Mission, which, have enabled the strengthening of the national vaccine development ecosystem, so as to effectively respond to pandemics.

Furthermore, 'Mission COVID Suraksha- the Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission', was launched as part of the third stimulus package, Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0, for promoting research and development of India COVID-19 vaccines. The Mission is led by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and is implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), at a total cost of Rs. 900 Cr.

The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG), a multi agency inter-Ministerial Consortium from Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), has been established for genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2.
