

# India in the forefront of developing COVID-19 vaccines: Dr Harsh Vardhan

**Dr Harsh Vardhan at the India-Portugal Technology Summit2020 “The next iteration of this collaboration will be to encourage new solutions based on cutting edge technologies such as Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence”.**

Posted On: 07 DEC 2020 6:04PM by PIB Delhi

Union Minister of Science and Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare, Dr Harsh Vardhan today informed the DST-CII India Portugal Technology Summit 2020 which is a flagship event with Portugal as a partner country, “In India, about 30 vaccines are in different stages of development. Two of them are in the most advanced stage of development - COVAXIN developed through ICMR-Bharat Biotech collaboration and COVISHIELD from the Serum Institute of India. Both are in the Phase-III clinical trial stage. Our premier institution – the Indian Council of Medical Research-is involved in their trial executions. India is also hosting clinical trials for all the major vaccine contenders. Serum Institute of India, the world’s largest vaccine manufacturer, is conducting trials for the vaccine developed by Oxford University. ZydusCadila is also conducting Ph2 trial of an indigenous DNA Vaccine. One of our pharma giants, Dr Reddy’s Laboratories, will distribute the Russian vaccine in India after conducting final-stage human trials and receiving regulatory approval”.



The Science & Technology Minister disclosed that India is among the top ten countries in the world with respect to number of patents filed. Highlighting India's efforts to fight the challenge of COVID, he said "More than 100 start-ups supported by the Government have provided innovative products and solutions to overcome challenges posed by Covid-19".

Dr Harsh Vardhan stated "The Summit is a reflection of the effective partnership between the Government and industry for developing a robust technology ecosystem for the country". The Minister said, "The next iteration of this collaboration will be to encourage new solutions based on cutting edge technologies such as Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence". He dwelt on India-Portugal relations in various fields over long years. Dr. Harsh Vardhan expressed the hope that the interactions offer a good opportunity for the participating companies to explore prospects for bilateral investments across sectors such as healthcare, water, agriculture, energy and Information Technologies.



Prof. Manuel Heitor, Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Government of Portugal, who was the Guest of Honour delivered the Keynote Address. He said, "These are times of solidarity. Our ties with India are strong. We need to rely on knowledge to be out of this crisis together".



Prof. Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, outlined that during all these years, the summit has facilitated co-creation of knowledge, two-way technology transfer, collaborative R&D projects and enhanced market access between India and the partner country's industry and research institutes. He said that the S&T ecosystem has blossomed in India by the gradually increasing focus of its policy regime, an impetus that has been ably supported by the years of economic reforms and landmark initiatives.

Over the past 26 years, the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India has been co-organizing the Technology Summit in partnership with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The summit has benefitted immensely the Indian industry and academic & research institutions by forging collaborations with global partners, including policy making that has triggered private sector's investment in R&D and technology significantly. Spain, South Korea, UK and Italy have also participated in the summits in the past.

The objectives of this summit are- a) Forge partnerships; b) Boost innovation, investment & trade and c) Facilitate technology transfers, joint projects and market access.

It is expected that the summit will achieve: a) Launch of an ambitious bilateral knowledge and innovation agenda; b) New Public-Private Partnerships between India and Portugal; c) Opportunities for fast-tracked market entry for new stakeholders; d) Market expansion opportunities for existing Indian and Portugal stakeholders; e) Deepening Indo-Portugal ties in multiple verticals of knowledge economy; f) Scaling up solutions for societal challenges; g) Foster Investments and market understanding and penetrations; and h) Collaborative research and Human Resource exchange; i) Large number of technology tie-ups between Indian Industry and Research Institutions ; and j) Signing of MoUs- charting the roadmap for strengthening future collaborations.

The focus sectors this year are a) Agritech; b) Watertech; c) Healthtech; d) Cleantech, energy, climate change; e) IT/ICT/ Emerging technologies; f) Innovation and start-ups and g) Space-Ocean interactions.

**Dr. V K Saraswat**, Member, NITI Aayog, Government of India; **Mr. Chandrajit Banerjee**, Director General, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII); **Mr. Alok Nanda**, Co-chairman, CII National Committee on R&D & Innovation and CTO, GE South Asia & CEO, GE India Technology Centre; **Mr. Vipin Sondhi**, Chairman, CII National Committee on R&D & Innovation and Chairman, Technology Summit and CEO and MD, Ashok Leyland; **Prof. Helena Pereira**, President, Board of Directors, FCT also addressed the inaugural session today. **Dr. Sanjeev K Varshney**, Head, International Cooperation, DST, Goa gave the closing remarks at the inaugural of the Summit today.

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