

## ICMR undertakes research initiative to eliminate TB from India



India TB Research and Development Corporation (ITRDC) to bring together all major national and international stakeholders to develop new tools (drug, diagnostics and vaccines) for TB.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has launched India TB Research and Development Corporation (ITRDC) to bring together all major national and international stakeholders to develop new tools (drug, diagnostics and vaccines) for TB. The move is aimed at eliminating TB from India. Tuberculosis (TB) is one of India's severest health crises. It kills two Indians every three minutes and more than 1,000 people every day. India has the highest TB burden in the world. The Global Tuberculosis Report 2016 released in October 2016 by the World Health Organisation updated the estimate of incidence - that is, the number of new tuberculosis cases in a year - to 2.8 million in 2015. The updated estimate of tuberculosis deaths, excluding deaths of HIV-positive people, is 478,000 in 2015 and 483,000 in 2014.

Elaborating on the initiative, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, DG (ICMR), stated, "Under the guidance of the Prime Minister, TB has been taken as a national priority. The aim is to reduce the incidence on new TB cases by 95 percent and reduce mortality by 95 percent. Research will be accelerated to improve cure rates and to accelerate decline in new cases. Implementation research will focus on finding and framing strategies to treat TB patients by involving all stakeholders. The aim is to ensure that all TB patients get assured quality diagnosis and treatment." The initiative has been undertaken after a consensus from the various government, non-government and international research organisations in a high level meeting with officials from MOH&FW, DBT, CSIR, DST, TDB, WHO, Gates Foundation in February 2016 wherein all the members agreed to support the corporation.

In a few months time, the detailed landscape analysis of the national and global leads in four thematic areas namely diagnostics, vaccines, therapeutics and implementation research has been done and most advanced leads have been identified for taking forward. The first International Scientific Advisory Group (ISAG) meeting was convened on November 9-10, 2016 in New Delhi bringing together the eminent international and national TB experts from four thematic areas. The ISAG members were appreciative of the tremendous progress made in a short span of time and the efforts put in by all the working group members in preparing a consolidated landscape analysis of all national and international leads in each area and shortlisting the leads along with their plan of action. The leads identified for taking ahead, the way forward & timelines were critically analysed by the group and they identified core areas and guided on the strategy for the initiative to fight TB and achieve its goal.