

My Dear CSIR Family Members,

As we draw curtains on the year 2020, it is time to, introspect the year that went by, and contemplate the way ahead in 2021. This moment allows us to assess collectively, and individually, whether the targets set forth have been accomplished. It is also time to appreciate the achievements, and learn from the shortcomings for the times to come.

At the beginning of this year little did we know that 2020 would witness a situation of such a magnitude that despite all the scientific progress achieved in the last hundred years, humanity would be truly humbled by a virus. Yet, it was also evident that Science alone could provide a solution to the problem. As a premier S&T organization, CSIR had to continuously assess the unfolding situation and ensure that we do our best to help alleviate the problem, focusing on the societal and economic needs of our nation. It is often said that in times of crisis lies opportunities, and the defining feature of all great organizations has been to seize such moments. CSIR as an organization has worked hard and rallied to convert the crisis into an opportunity, and work for the benefit of the country. I offer my own sincere gratitude to all of you for rising to the occasion and demonstrating the spirit of togetherness, the zeal for innovation, and converting our deep technical knowledge base into high value solutions to mitigate the pandemic.

The remarkable contributions of CSIR in Covid-19 mitigation which have ranged from diagnostics like FELUDA to ventilators like SwasthVayu to drugs like Favipiravir and many more can be attributed to multiple factors. This includes the blend of young and the mature scientists, highly motivated students and project staff, and contributions from committed common cadre staff and contractual staff. Another major factor has been the multidisciplinary character of CSIR. Although we work in different geographical locations, and in defined areas of research, the fact that we have within our own family, people who specialize in different areas and are ready to offer a helping hand in times of need is reassuring. This has richly paid its dividend in Covid-19 and has allowed to exploit that very nature of our multi-disciplinarity and deliver the innovations in a very short span of time. One of our New Year resolve must therefore be to harness the power of multi-disciplinary nature of CSIR, to forge collaborations across laboratories and external stakeholders, and to bring even more impactful solutions to the society in the post-Covid era.

Moving forward we need to plan for post Covid era diligently and recently the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, and President of CSIR Society has given a clarion call for AtmaNirbhar Bharat. CSIR must seize this opportunity and deliver to make India self-reliant through S&T and Innovation. A strategy and road map has been prepared by CSIR with wide consultations with a plan to implement many of the ideas in the coming year. For a focussed implementation, the eight broad theme verticals have now been further sub-divided into 53 sub-verticals and wide ranging consultative process was carried out recently and a strategy plan has been evolved which will accelerate delivery. Further, CSIR HQ has been reorganized with a vision to focus on innovation, technology development and strong stakeholder connect with industry and ministries for rapid and effective dissemination of the activities to society at large.

Beyond self-reliance, it is time to contemplate about our future programs, and how we can remain at the forefront of scientific research, technology developments, and translation in collaboration with industrial partners for larger societal benefit. CSIR has made forays into research on clean Hydrogen fuel, conversion of coal to methanol, Carbon capture, utilization and storage, off shore power generation, genome editing using contemporary CRISPR/Cas technique which are some of the emerging and futuristic areas. We should identify the future needs and plan for the R&D and for that it is necessary that all of us continuously engage with each other and ideate on the future of Science, and CSIR's contributions. It is only with open and inclusive discussions we can hope to remain at the forefront of S&T globally.

There has been excellent work achieved in many areas in recent times and key highlights includes a record generation of Lab Reserve Fund (LRF), thanks to the enormous efforts of scientists and technical staff. In the last financial year, CSIR has generated in excess of Rs 1000 Crores, which we should be proud of. Another big accomplishment has been the successful conduct of India International Science Festival(IISF), 2020. The IISF has been conducted since 2015, but given the extraordinary situation this year, it had its own challenges. CSIR was the nodal agency to conduct the entire event and I would like to place on record contributions of all involved in making this event successful.

Another notable milestone has been the successful implementation of the cadre review process in CSIR. The current process was initiated in 2014 and the last cadre review took place more than 25 years ago. Given the scale of its magnitude, and the complexities involved, this has been truly an excellent achievement. Covid-19 has demonstrated the power of electronic communications, digitization of processes, and enablement of all activities by IT-led solutions and we have been able to implement the ERP this year. However, a lot more needs to be done and we must resolve to move to digitization of all our activities in near future. Only then can we dream to be a next-gen organization and aspire to be among the global best.

On a somber note, this year CSIR has lost some of its most distinguished leaders of the past, which includes Prof. SK Joshi and Prof. Roddam Narasimha. Both of them continue to inspire us, and we are committed to realize their vision.

Finally, 2020 year has been an unusual year with the pandemic causing uncertainty and loss but also demonstrating the power of science, strength of R&D and the commitment of people to rise to the challenges. It has provided CSIR an opportunity to show its strength and tremendous resilience in dealing with the crisis. We must continue on the same path of delivery in the coming year and bring high value to society through our interventions. I wish all of you, your family and friends the very best for 2021.

Shekhar C. Mande