

ICMR to be considered as an Autonomous Organization

The HPC strongly recommends that ICMR should be equated with other sister organizations like CSIR-DSIR, ICAR-DARE etc since the Department of Health Research (DHR) is now in place.

The Committee notes that the present report on ICMR's performance in the XI Plan was actuated on account of the fact that currently ICMR is one of the schemes being run through the budget of the Department of Health Research. The Committee is cognisant that the idea of an independent review of ongoing schemes draws support from the need to avoid inadequate synergy or a lack of synergy between various Ministries, resulting in duplication of efforts and sub-optimal utilisation of Government resources.

Be that as it may, the Committee feels it necessary to state that it is not wise to equate the entire ICMR as an organization with the other schemes for the following reasons –

- (i) The Indian Council of Medical Research is among the world's oldest institutions in the field of Bio-medical research.
- (ii) ICMR is mandated as per its MOA, inter-alia, to–
 - a) Undertake the prosecution and assistance of bio-medical research, the propagation of knowledge and experimental measures in connection, *inter-alia* with causation, mode of spread and prevention of Communicable Diseases/Non-communicable Diseases; Basic Medical Sciences; Traditional Medicine; Problems of urban health; Nutritional problems; Reproductive and Child health issues; Public health, etc.
 - b) Initiate, aid, and develop and coordinate medical scientific research in India and to promote and assist institutions for the study of diseases, their prevention, causation and remedy.
- (iii) In its pursuit of the above mandate, ICMR has in its over a century old history, established a large network of Institutes and Centres that are at the very heart of the country's effort to successfully tackle the various health related issues facing the general populace.
- (iv) Many initiatives undertaken in the field of bio-medical research are inherently long drawn and the deliverables do not lend themselves to easy quantification as is the case in other schemes that form part of the health delivery system viz. NRHM etc.

- (v) The pursuit of science through the ICMR network is overseen each year by a well established multi-layered peer review through independent subject experts of national/international repute in the related field/discipline.

Thus treating ICMR as a scheme for the purposes of transition from the one plan to the next, and making future funding contingent on the outcome of a review, would be too narrow an interpretation of the Governments instruction.

HPC reiterates that ICMR by virtue of its functioning over a century, should be equated as an autonomous institution under DHR on the patterns of CSIR/DSIR and ICAR/DARE for all purpose including such reviews as mandated by Govt of India. Notwithstanding the above, the Committee is firmly of the view that the activities of the ICMR and its Institutes and Centres must be subjected at periodic intervals, say once every five years, to a rigorous scientific review over and above the existing internal review mechanism for outcomes.