

UK and India join forces on new £8 million research

The funding awards were announced by Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, ahead of a virtual visit to India on 28 July.

India is a major producer of antimicrobials in the pharmaceutical industry global supply chain, and the research projects aim to develop a better understanding of how waste from antimicrobial manufacturing could be inadvertently fuelling AMR.

Subject to clearances, the five projects are planned for September 2020. The UK is contributing £4 million from the UK Research and Innovation Fund for International Collaboration, and India is matching this with its own resources (£8m in total).

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad said:

The UK has already partnered with India's Serum Institute to manufacture the vaccine for Covid-19, if clinical trials are successful, with plans to distribute to a billion people across the developing world. But there is more we can do together to tackle urgent global health issues in the world. Our thriving research and innovation partnerships will benefit people in the UK and India, and beyond.

Sir Philip Barton, High Commissioner to India, said:

The UK is India's second biggest research partner, with joint research expected to be worth £400 million by next year. This huge investment enables us to work closely together on global health challenges such as the search for a Covid-19 vaccine. Today's announcement is another demonstration of our excellent research relationship and will strengthen the important fight against antimicrobial resistance.

During the visit to India, Minister Lord (Tariq) Ahmad will chair a virtual roundtable with senior Indian and UK-based stakeholders on cold-chain technologies that are critical for the effective transport of vaccines, ensuring they successfully reach their final destination.

Other elements of the Minister's visit include meeting with Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, Minister Muraleedharan, to discuss a number of subjects including multilateral cooperation, a meeting with Gujarati Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, discussions

with regional governments and others on opportunities in wind power and a virtual tour of a UK funded solar plant in Rajasthan.

UK Research and Innovation and the Government of India Department of Biotechnology are the responsible organisation/department leading on behalf of the UK and India for these AMR projects. Below is some more detail on the research projects:

1. SELECTAR – This research project involving representatives from UK and Indian universities (University of Birmingham, Aligarh Muslim University, Panjab University, CSIR-Central Drug Research Institute, Indian Institute of Technology, Jamia Millia Islamia University) will investigate the impact of waste release on microbial ecosystems, the extent to which this selects for resistance, and a full determination of all chemical components which can select for resistance and at which concentrations.
2. Advanced Metagenomics, Sensors and Photocatalysis for Antimicrobial Resistance Elimination (AMSPARE) – this proposal brings together experts on sensor technologies, water treatment and remediation from India with experts on policy and industrial regulatory, as well as research, processes from the UK, to research the issue of AMR proliferation in the environment.
3. Defining the AMR Burden of Antimicrobial Manufacturing Waste in Puducherry and Chennai, Imperial College London: the immediate impacts from this work relate to the advancement of scientific knowledge for addressing antimicrobial resistance in the environment and the development of skills, capacity and capability.
4. AMRflows: antimicrobials and resistance from manufacturing flows to people: joined up experiments, mathematical modelling and risk analysis involving representatives from Birmingham University, the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad Civil Engineering and Indian Institute Technology Gandhinagar. This project's goals are to:
 - i) contribute to risk assessment and setting evidence-based environmental standards.
 - ii) evaluate the effect of changes in wastewater treatment and effluent release on AMR exposure and recommend changes in practise if these are advisable.
5. Resolving the fate and studying the impact of pharmaceutical wastes on the environment and local community of a pharmaceutical manufacturing hub. Representatives from the University of Warwick, PGIMER, CSIR-NEERI, Aligarh Muslim University, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi and Banaras Hindu University will come together to inform policy-makers, implementers, and

industry experts and managers to understand the impacts of inappropriate waste disposal.

- Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon is the Minister of State for the Commonwealth, UN and South Asia at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. Lord Ahmad last visited India in October 2019.
- Lord Ahmad's mother was born in Jodhpur, Rajasthan and his father in Gurdaspur, Punjab.

For media queries, please contact:

Sally Hedley, Head of Communications
Press and Communications, British High Commission,
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021. Tel: 24192100

Mail to: BHCMediaDelhi@fco.gov.uk

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