



Science for Society

Science for Man

Science in Thinking

BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SOCIETY

All India Committee

8A Creek Lane, Kolkata 700014, WB, INDIA

Tel: 8902388578, 9433369069, 9477514644

E-mail: breakthrough@ieee.org Web: www.breakthrough-india.org

Registration No. S/86180 of 1996-97 under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961

A Voluntary Organization Committed to the Cause of Science, Culture and Scientific Outlook

Date: 06/07/2020

Press statement regarding the proposed release of COVID-19 vaccine by August 15, 2020

It is bewildering to note that the ICMR has sent a letter to scientists setting a deadline of August 15, 2020, for the public launch of a vaccine for COVID-19. The Breakthrough Science Society welcomes the timely statement given by the Indian Academy of Sciences criticising the ICMR letter.

We thank the Indian Academy of Sciences (IASc), the premier body of scientists of our country, for playing its due role at the appropriate hour, reflecting the voice of the scientific community, by informing people about the scientific procedure for testing the efficacy of a proposed vaccine and pointing out that August 15 is not a realistic roll-out date for the vaccine, with 15-18 months being a more realistic time-frame.

The Breakthrough Science Society welcomes the effort of scientists of the ICMR and the few Indian companies involved in developing a vaccine for COVID-19, and the initiation of human trial.

However, we are strongly critical of the unscientific move of announcing the date of public release of the vaccine which is unlikely given the process. It is reported that a Science Ministry Statement itself stated that the two vaccines developed in India, COVAXIN and ZyCov-D that have entered the stage of human trials, are not likely to be ready by 2021. But surprisingly, those words were deleted later with the claim that 'the grammar of the sentence was wrong'. It is unconvincing that the content is deleted instead of correcting a grammar mistake. Further, the ex-ICMR chief N. K. Ganguly himself has stated that a good vaccine usually takes at least 18 months before its roll-out to production after fast-tracking all the mandatory regulatory approvals.

The IASc statement has also voiced concern that, as the safety and efficacy tests for a vaccine are unlikely to be completed by that time, undue pressure might lead to the scientific procedure being compromised, leading to unwelcome consequences. Scientific enterprise needs to remain committed to strict protocols, abide by scientific methods, work towards public health ensuring safety and large-scale availability of the fruits of science to common man.

We urge upon the ICMR not to create false hopes regarding public release of the vaccine, and to heed to the opinion of experts in the field. We sincerely hope that the ICMR and the Health Ministry would take note of the serious concerns raised by the IASc as well as scientists and medical professionals at large, allow science to take its due course by following strict protocols, rectify its misleading deadline and instead, set both optimistic and realistic deadlines.

Thanking you,

Dhrubajyoti Mukhopadhyay
President

Soumitro Banerjee
General Secretary