

Timely action helped control pandemic, says Harsh Vardhan

PM regularly interacted with Chief Ministers, he says

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The COVID-19 pandemic had derailed years of painstaking efforts, but timely action helped control the disease from spreading, said Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Monday.

Strategic thinking, aggressive campaigns, deep commitment from doctors and other frontline workers were needed in this connection, he added.

In his virtual convocation address at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (SRIHER), the Minister said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been regularly interacting with the Chief Ministers of all the States and the Union Territories, besides stakeholders, for effective management of the pandemic.

The Centre had also taken up vaccination programme in a big way, besides promoting telemedicine. As many

as 23 States used eSanjeevani, through which 11 lakh teleconsultations had been conducted.

He said Ayushman Bharat had been launched to create 1.5 lakh health and wellness centres. Around 10.74 crore underprivileged and vulnerable families had been identified for a health cover of ₹5 lakh per family annually for treatment in secondary and tertiary care hospitals, Dr. Vardhan said.

The Centre had increased the bed strength from nine to 40 per 10,000. It had also made efforts to improve the doctor-patient ratio by increasing the number of medical colleges, he added.

At present, 10% of people in the country were covered under health insurance schemes, he said. As many as 75 district hospitals had been converted into medical colleges and 14 of them in Tamil Nadu alone, he pointed out.

The Central government had increased the number of AIIMS from six to 22, he added.

Dr. Vardhan lauded SRIHER for allotting a separate block to treat COVID-19 patients and for conducting ICMR vaccine trials, besides serving as a testing centre.

Chancellor V.R. Venkataachalam, Pro-Chancellor R.V. Sengutuvan and Vice-Chancellor P.V. Vijayaraghavan distributed 94 gold medals to meritorious students and certificates to 1,266 students.

In his report, Dr. Vijayaraghavan said SRIHER had been undertaking clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines with the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech International. The Institute had launched three new courses this year — M.Sc Sports and Exercise Psychology; MPT (Sports) and part-time executive diploma in healthcare management.