

KERALA

NIIST on a mission to fight COVID-19

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Process for producing drugs to fight pandemic on at the institute

The National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST) here at Pappanamcode has begun work on developing new processes for producing certain drugs which could prove vital in the battle against COVID-19.

NIIST scientists are working on developing the process chemistry of three drug molecules as part of a pan-CSIR activity to repurpose/develop drugs for the treatment of COVID-19. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has selected, in all, 14 drugs which are under clinical trials for other diseases to see whether they can be of use in the current crisis.

“A specific cure for COVID-19 is yet to be found anywhere. We are part of a CSIR initiative which is looking at a clutch of drugs, which have been distributed among the different CSIR labs across the country. Research will take time, but it will also be valuable for the long term,” NIIST Director Ajayaghosh A. said.

Many drugs which are being repurposed are either approved for use against different ailments or are in clinical trials, an NIIST scientist involved in the research said. “The idea is that if one of these drugs prove effective in fighting COVID-19 anywhere, India will be ready for mass production,” the scientist said.

The CSIR had pointed out in a communique to research institutes under it that ‘repositioning’ of launched or even failed drugs to viral diseases “provides unique translational opportunities, including a substantially higher probability of success to market as compared with developing new virus-specific drugs and vaccines, and a significantly reduced cost and timeline to clinical availability.”

Other activities

NIIST is working on a number of other research areas as well as part of the CSIR mission against COVID-19. This include the development of antiviral materials and coatings for use in personal protection equipment and surfaces and preventive medicines and immunity boosters for geriatric health care. The institute is also looking at how common face-masks and surgical masks can be modified.

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