

## Open source drug discovery launched to combat infectious diseases

The scourge of infectious diseases like tuberculosis (TB), malaria, etc. generally afflicts poor people in the developing world, with a loss of millions of lives every year, which could otherwise be saved. Due to long gestation period, heavy R&D costs, low success rate and low returns from the afflicted poor patients, big pharmaceutical companies do not see any lucrative business in developing drugs for such diseases.

To combat these problems and provide affordable healthcare (low-cost drugs) to the poor, an innovative 'Open Source Drug Discovery' (OSDD) programme was recently launched by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in New Delhi, according to a press release posted at the official website of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.

OSDD is based on three fundamental principles of collaboration, sharing and discovering. In fact, it is a pathbreaking

research programme of the people, by the people, for the people.

OSDD – a CSIR led consortium with global partnership – promises to offer a viable alternate model of drug discovery for infectious diseases by allowing open access of resources and providing incentives to contribute to this cooperative effort. For this purpose, CSIR has set up a web portal (<http://www.osdd.net>), which will act as a data resource and a discussion platform for the concerned participants to share their ideas.

Anyone can contribute or modify the contents on this website in a collaborative mode, just like the Wikipedia. However, these ideas and suggestions will be peer-reviewed and acknowledged accordingly. A large number of researchers will be united through the internet to exploit their inventive spirit in a collaborative mode for drug discovery.

A number of CSIR laboratories, non-CSIR institutes, Indian universities and

private companies are participating in this largest ever collaborative drug discovery programme. In addition, Global Research Alliance is also supporting OSDD. India will spend Rs 500 crores for OSDD and more help is expected to come from international agencies and philanthropists.

Researchers will explore large chemical databases using bioinformatics to identify potential drugs *in silico*, which will later be tested at CSIR-sponsored laboratories. A core committee of OSDD experts will make potential drugs generic as soon as they are discovered, so that pharmaceutical companies can manufacture these and sell them at affordable prices.

1. [http://dst.gov.in/whats\\_new/press-release08/csir-drug-discovery.htm](http://dst.gov.in/whats_new/press-release08/csir-drug-discovery.htm)
2. <http://www.osdd.net>

Abhay S. D. Rajput

## India bags two International Academy of Astronautics Awards 2008

Two prestigious awards of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) for the year 2008 came to India which were presented on 28 September 2008 during the Academy Day Function at Glasgow, Scotland, UK organized as a part of the International Astronautical Congress (IAC) 2008.

The Team Achievement Award was presented to two teams from Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in-

cluding the PSLV-C7 team that launched CARTOSAT-2 and the team that deployed and recovered Space capsule Recovery Experiment (SRE-1; [http://www.isro.org/pressrelease/Sep30\\_2008\\_251.htm](http://www.isro.org/pressrelease/Sep30_2008_251.htm)).

*Touching Lives* a book by S. K. Das was honoured with Luigi Napolitano Book Award of IAA. It is given to recognize excellence in recent publications in any field related to space by any non-member of the Academy. *Touching Lives*

is an account of people whose lives have been transformed by ISRO's space technology ([http://www.isro.org/pressrelease/Sep30\\_2008\\_253.htm](http://www.isro.org/pressrelease/Sep30_2008_253.htm)). It journeys through some space technology aided revolutions sweeping the country like telemedicine, EDUSAT distance education, warning system for fishermen, etc.

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## CSIR Award for S&T Innovations for Rural Development 2008

The winners of the CSIR Award for S&T Innovations for Rural Development (CAIRD) 2008 were announced recently on the occasion of the 66th CSIR Foundation day.

According to a Ministry of S&T, Govt of India press release, the award goes jointly to Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Lucknow for 'Biovillage Strategy for Agri-business of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants' and

Central Salt & Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI), Bhavnagar for 'Innovations in the area of salt for rural development'. Both the institutes have contributed to the upliftment of the livelihood of rural people through their sustainable efforts and innovations.

The award carrying a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh, a citation and a shield was instituted by CSIR in 2006, 'to recognize and honour S&T innovations that have

helped transform the lives of rural people'. For further details see: [http://dst.gov.in/whats\\_new/press-release08/csir-rural-development-2008.htm](http://dst.gov.in/whats_new/press-release08/csir-rural-development-2008.htm)

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