

India after COVID-19: Creating Strategies for Exploiting New Opportunities and Addressing Challenges

COVID-19 pandemic has created a widespread global disruption and exposed serious flaws in many critical areas. The pandemic has highlighted, for example the unpreparedness and inefficiency of existing models of health care systems globally including drug and vaccine development, inefficiency of production and global supply chains, urban infrastructure, transportation, food security among others. It has also shown how one can efficiently reorganize work places, education, health care, etc. through online modes. Close reading of recent global discussions on these issues underscores India's influential role in the present crisis. The world has high expectations from India in stabilizing the global economy, and in developing environment-health-safety ecosystem that can address the post-COVID challenges. A new 'window of opportunity' has emerged for India to address the critical gaps by exploiting the opportunities that benefits India and the world at large. The Government of India has already taken strategic decisions that would enable India to be the global production hub of drug and vaccine including new drug/vaccine development, manufacturing, and integrating more aggressively in the global production supply and value chain. On the other hand, there is a strong policy focus on strengthening digital infrastructure, rural enterprise creation, strengthening health care system, transportation, and urban infrastructure.

CSIR-NISTADS is a policy research think-tank that undertakes evidence based policy studies on science-technology-innovation with an interdisciplinary perspective. The focus of the studies are for providing policy inputs and advocacy to Government for societal and industrial development through S&T interventions. The opportunities and challenges of COVID-19 for India motivates NISTADS to develop focused policy documents that can strengthen the government's efforts. A strong slant will be towards aligning the studies with sustainable development goals. NISTADS will host Webinars to bring in thought leaders, professionals and eminent experts. This exercise is expected to provide clarity, understanding and a clear direction towards bringing out focussed policy documents. The key themes and topics to be covered under the policy discussion are highlighted below.

Healthcare system

Access & affordability of drugs, surveillance, standardisation (specification, quality control), regulation and governance (clinical trials including solidarity clinical trails, safety protocols and guidelines), R&D (drug repositioning, new drug and vaccine development, clinical trials), university/research organisations and industry linkages

Environmental Studies

Sustaining gains of positive effects on environment due to lockdown (strategies to be undertaken), addressing new demands of water

Urban Planning including Transport

Smart city (learning from experiences), new approaches for urban planning and transport post-COVID

Inclusive Development of Rural Sector

Developing self-sustaining rural ecosystem, rural entrepreneurship including Women entrepreneurship

Digital Eco-system including Human Resource Development

Strategies for reorganisation of office work, production ecosystem, and education through digital/online modes, assessing new demands for effective online access/interventions, institutional capacity development including skill enhancement for creating an effective digital platform

Traditional Systems

Standardisation of drugs, quality control, repositioning of traditional drugs and practices, creating synergy with indigenous alternative medicine systems and modern drugs/healthcare practices

New & Existing Enterprise Development

MSME, Startups, integration of R&D organisations/academia and industry for enterprise development