

# India March For Science

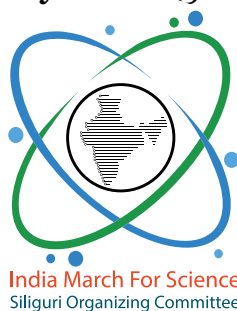
## IMFS 2020 - An Appeal

Dear Friends,

Since its inception in 2017, India March for Science (IMFS), in solidarity with the International March for Science, has been championing the aspirations of scientists, researchers and science-loving people of the country for greater support for science, education, and scientific research.

Today, the world is witnessing one of the greatest crises so far, the COVID19 pandemic, with India the third worst-affected country in the world. Members of IMFS have been actively engaged with disseminating scientific information and busting myths and misinformation around this pandemic.

IMFS continues to pitch for adequate funding for scientific research, education, health care, promotion of scientific temper, and evidence-based policies. The present crisis has yet again reinforced the urgency of these tasks. In this context, IMFS draws attention, in particular, to the following specific concerns:



**1.** Many unscientific ideas and untested remedies for COVID-19 are propagated by some quarters, even by people in the top echelons of governments - both state and central.

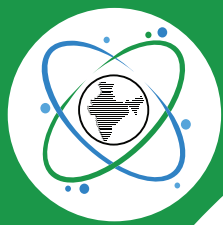
**2.** The prevailing economic situation during the pandemic is being used as a reason to further reduce the already inadequate funding for educational institutions and scientific research.

**3.** The draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2020 issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change would lead to dilution of the existing EIA process and encourage environ-

mental violations at a time when COVID-19 pandemic itself underscores the need for more stringent measures to protect and sustain the environment.

**4.** In the absence of contact teaching due to physical distancing requirement, most schools, colleges, and universities have taken recourse to on-line teaching as the only available option. However, this is creating a new 'digital' divide in the country, with most students not having adequate facilities to absorb such teaching. We implore the Government to take emergency measures





to improve on-line connectivity in the country, and to consider the possibility of delaying the commencement of academic sessions to a time when equal learning opportunities are available to all students in India. We, however, stress that on-line education cannot substitute formal education at any level as the 'new normal'.

**5.** The complete removal of important chapters from the CBSE syllabus for classes 9-12, ostensibly to reduce curricular load, is a matter of serious concern. Easing the syllabus by trimming the advanced sub-topics across chapters would have been a viable and more scientific alternative..

**6.** While certain important and constructive measures have been taken by the state and central governments towards addressing the COVID-19 crisis, lack of adequate medical facil-

ities including ventilators, doctors, public health care centers, nurses and health workers, testing kits and PPEs for medical staff, and testing and quarantine facilities have underlined the need for a greater focus on public health funding and for universal healthcare. Stress on the privatization of health services and weakening of existing infrastructure in the public sector has created a situation where the poor are unable to afford the high cost of treatment of COVID-19 in private hospitals. This calls for strengthening the health services in the public sector.

**7.** IMFS had previously appealed to the Prime Minister of India in April 2020 for concrete and urgent steps to alleviate the misery of migrant workers. Due to prolonged periods of lockdown and economic stagnation, the loss of livelihoods of the daily-wage and migrant labourers continues to be a matter of grave concern.

IMFS lauds the valuable and selfless services of the front-line workers for their timely and effective response to the Covid-19 crisis. We hope that the ongoing efforts in vaccine research across the globe will achieve success as early as practically possible and will be within the reach of even the poorest of the poor.

We appeal to scientists, researchers, teachers, students, as well as all concerned citizens to conduct and/or take part in the various relevant events such as webinars, poster making, coining slogans, one-minute videos and so on in consultation with India March for Science on 9 August 2020 to highlight the aforesaid areas of concern, while observing Covid-19 safety protocols.

