

DST and BIRAC Emphasise Innovation-Led Partnerships at IGSTC Strategic Conclave 2026 on Mobile Health & Telemedicine

Telehealth has emerged as a critical vertical within the armed forces' healthcare ecosystem, which serves approximately 1.6 crore personnel, veterans and their families: Surg VAdm Dr. Arti Sarin, DGAFMS

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The IGSTC Strategic Conclave 2026 on “Mobile Health & Telemedicine” was held today at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, bringing together policymakers, scientists, industry leaders and healthcare experts to deliberate on advancing digital health solutions through Indo-German collaboration.

Dr. Kusumita Arora, Director IGSTC explained that this conclave is an attempt to bring key stakeholders to a common discussion forum: leaders from government sectors, healthcare specialists and academic researchers, as well industry experts. It is envisaged that conversations among these three pillars of the S&T innovation landscape will serve to drive progress forward. And move beyond this stage of research discourse of co- creation of solutions for unsolved technical challenges.

Surg VAdm Dr. Arti Sarin, DGAFMS, elaborated on the strategic importance of telemedicine in the Armed Forces Medical Services. She stated that telehealth has emerged as a critical vertical within the armed forces' healthcare ecosystem, which serves approximately 1.6 crore personnel, veterans and their families. She highlighted the evolution of telemedicine from early real-time consultations to satellite-enabled platforms supporting maritime deployments and remote high-altitude areas. She emphasised the need for secure, encrypted communication systems, wearable health tracking devices, AI-enabled diagnostics and regulatory clarity to ensure ethical and resilient telehealth systems in sensitive operational environments.

Dr. Jitendra Kumar, Managing Director, BIRAC, highlighted the critical role of biotechnology-led innovation in strengthening digital health delivery. He stressed the importance of supporting startups and innovators working at the intersection of diagnostics, digital platforms and medical devices. He noted that structured funding support, mentorship and regulatory facilitation are essential to prevent talent migration and ensure that Indian innovations are translated into accessible healthcare solutions. He emphasised that international collaboration, including Indo-German partnerships, can help co-create solutions suited to India's diverse healthcare landscape while leveraging global standards and expertise.

Dr. Sunita Sharma, Director General Health Services (DGHS), highlighted the integration of telemedicine within India's expanding digital health landscape under the National Digital Health Mission. She noted that telemedicine services are now available up to the **Ayushman Mandir level**, enabling access to healthcare in rural and underprivileged areas. She emphasised the importance of artificial

intelligence, machine learning and point-of-care technologies, particularly for national programs such as tuberculosis eradication. She also underlined the need for strong regulatory mechanisms, data privacy safeguards and sustained funding to ensure responsible adoption and prevent misuse of emerging technologies.

Mr Pavan Chaudhary, Chairman Medical Technology Association of India while narrating the industry expectations has emphasized for the need for the focussed translational research and incentivised approach.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Arindam Bhattacharyya, Department of Science and Technology (DST), underscored the importance of building innovation ecosystems that integrate science, technology and public health priorities. He emphasised that telemedicine and mobile health technologies must move beyond pilot stages and evolve into scalable, sustainable platforms capable of addressing systemic healthcare challenges, particularly in underserved and remote regions. He highlighted the role of DST in fostering collaborative research, supporting translational pathways and enabling strategic partnerships between academia, startups and industry to accelerate deployment of deep-tech healthcare solutions.

The Conclave deliberated on emerging technologies including AI-enabled diagnostics, remote patient monitoring, wearable devices and chip-based laboratory services. Discussions also focused on regulatory frameworks, data protection, financing mechanisms and strategies to address the digital divide. Participants emphasised the need for bilateral research collaborations, industry-academia partnerships and structured R&D roadmaps to accelerate the development of deep technologies suited to India's diverse geographic and socio-economic conditions.

The event reaffirmed the commitment of DST, BIRAC and partner institutions to advancing mobile health and telemedicine as inclusive, secure and innovation-driven pillars of India's future-ready healthcare system.







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