Union Health Secretary Smt. Punya Salila Srivastava inaugurates Sleep Study Facility and Autism Lab, flags off E-cart Ambulance at IIT Madras

Smt. Srivastava visits key healthcare research and innovation centres at IIT Madras, covering brain research, cancer studies and medical technologies

Indigenous healthcare and assistive technologies at IIT Madras aim to improve access to affordable healthcare and support persons with disabilities and the elderly

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Union Health Secretary Smt. Punya Salila Srivastava today inaugurated the Sleep Study Facility and Autism Lab at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras and flagged off an E-cart Ambulance service at the Institute Hospital. Her visit also included the Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre, Department of Medical Sciences and Technology, National Cancer Tissue Biobank, Healthcare Technology Innovation Centre (HTIC) and National Centre for Assistive Health Technologies (NCAHT), covering the Institute's work in healthcare research, medical technologies and assistive solutions.



The newly established Sleep Study Facility at the Campus Health Centre will provide specialised assessment, consultation and treatment for sleep-related disorders among students, faculty, staff and researchers, with support from specialists associated with Kauvery Hospitals, Chennai. Subject to institutional ethics approval and informed consent, it will also enable research on sleep patterns and different types of sleep disorders. The faculty also intends to develop indigenous, cost-effective sensors for sleep monitoring and analysis.

The E-cart Ambulance service, introduced as part of the Institute's campus wellness initiative, will facilitate timely medical assistance and convenient transportation within the campus, particularly for elderly members of the campus community and patients requiring assistance.



The Autism Lab initiative draws on traditional Indian medical knowledge, clinical expertise and technology to study Integrated Varmam Therapy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as part of the activities leading to the establishment of the Centre for Indian Medical Knowledge (CIMK) at IIT Madras. The Institute proposes to collaborate with the Paediatric Neurology team at AIIMS Jodhpur, which has experience in administering the integrated therapy to more than 800 children, to study and scientifically evaluate the treatment protocol. The initiative also envisages developing indigenous pressure sensing gloves to provide real-time feedback to practitioners, alongside research into the possible genetic, molecular and epigenetic mechanisms underlying the therapy, subject to requisite ethical approvals.



At the Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre, Smt. Srivastava was informed about its work in developing high-resolution, three-dimensional digital maps of the human brain at cellular resolution. On 11th October 2026, the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi dedicated the Centre to the nation and launched its mission to create cellular-resolution maps of over 100 human brains across different stages of life, including brain-related diseases. The Prime Minister also released C-STROKE, the world's first human ischaemic stroke atlas, comprising over 1,000 annotated brain sections.

The Union Health Secretary was then briefed on the interdisciplinary work of the Department of Medical Sciences and Technology, which brings together medical sciences, engineering and technology to address unmet healthcare needs. Established in 2023, the Department focuses on developing physician-scientists and engineering physiologists, with research spanning cardiovascular medicine, neurology, oncology, medical imaging, artificial intelligence in healthcare and medical device development.

At the National Cancer Tissue Biobank, Smt. Srivastava was briefed on the work of this joint initiative of the Department of Science and Technology and IIT Madras, which collects and preserves cancer tissue samples with patients' informed consent for research into cancer biology, diagnosis and treatment. A significant outcome of the Biobank's wider research ecosystem is the Bharat Cancer Genome Atlas, launched in February 2025, which aims to develop an India-specific cancer genomic database to support early diagnosis, targeted therapies and personalised treatment strategies.

Subsequently, Smt. Srivastava was apprised of work at the Healthcare Technology Innovation Centre (HTIC) on affordable and indigenous healthcare technologies, including the Mobile Eye Surgical Unit for cataract surgeries in remote areas, 3nethra for early

detection of eye diseases, the Neonatal Transport Unit, iQuant for rapid diagnostic testing and ArtSens for cardiovascular health assessment.



Her visit to the National Centre for Assistive Health Technologies (NCAHT) focused on affordable assistive technologies for persons with disabilities and the elderly, including lightweight wheelchairs, power-assisted mobility devices, swimming pool lifts and walking aids for children with cerebral palsy. Among its key innovations is YD One, an ultra-lightweight active wheelchair designed to enhance independent mobility.

Smt. Srivastava was accompanied by Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras and Prof. R. Sarathi, Dean (Planning), IIT Madras, during her visit to the facilities.

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