

Old TB drugs, older tests driving spread of drug resistance: Gates

“Most common TB test is more than 125 years old; TB drugs are more than 40 years old”

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NEW DELHI: Microsoft chairman and philanthropist Bill Gates on Thursday said the large number of deaths in the world due to tuberculosis was unacceptable and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was all for supporting a low-cost affordable vaccine for the disease.

“Whatever helps the poor-est, we are committed to it,” Mr. Gates said at an interaction with the media here on “Maximising India’s Capacity: Creating an Ecosystem of Innovation and Research to Address Public Health Concerns,” organised by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Mr. Gates appreciated India’s success in reducing TB-related deaths through the Directly Observed Treatment



Gates Foundation all for supporting a low-cost affordable vaccine for TB

Foundation committed to working with India in R&D, drugs, vaccines

Short (DOTS) course. The Foundation was committed to working with India in research and development, drugs, vaccines and expanding to more areas like agriculture.

“We can back young scientists in India in their research,” he said.

Twelve months after his visit to a TB facility here to mark the World TB Day, he said the major problem was outdated

poor tests and outdated treatments is driving the spread of drug resistance, undercutting global efforts to stop the epidemic.”

“Fortunately, there is a promising pipeline of new TB diagnostics, drugs and vaccines under development. And we are starting to see results. Just today, I saw how

India is using these innovations. I marked World TB Day by visiting the state-of-the-art L.R.S. Institute of Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases, which uses a new and molecular test, GeneXpert, which can accurately determine whether a patient has TB in about two hours.”

“Molecular diagnostics could revolutionise TB care, and things would continue to improve as the price comes down and new tests are developed. This is where India

could have a global impact. India is a leader in developing low-cost health technologies and it could produce high-quality, inexpensive molecular TB diagnostics. This will increase access at home and across the globe.”

Union Science and Technology Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal said the Department of Science and Technology was collaborating in several programmes with the Gates Foundation and would soon broaden its scope to the agriculture sector also.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) was working with 4,500 young scientists globally to find a treatment for TB under its Open Source Drug Discovery programme, he said.