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Title: Need to expedite the procurement of Genexpert TB test machines.

SHRI KALIKESH N. SINGH DEO (BOLANGIR): Tuberculosis is one of India's greatest public health challenges. India has the highest burden of TB in the world and accounts for ¼th of its global incidence. Every year, 2.2 million persons develop the disease, out of which about 8,00,000 are infectious and nearly 3,00,000 lose their lives due to TB.

The most widely used method to detect TB is the 125 year old sputum smear microscopy test. This method has low sensitivity and is incapable of determining drug-resistance. Further, the conventional diagnosis of drug-resistant TB is a slow and cumbersome process. During this time, patients may be inappropriately treated, drug-resistant strains may continue to spread and resistance may have become amplified.

To counter the problem of delay in detection and diagnosis, the Government's Central TB division announced a roll out of 300 rapid GeneXpert TB test machines. After a nationwide survey, it was ascertained that the test can detect five times more cases of drug resistant tuberculosis. Thus, the machine has the capability to bolster the Government's war on drug resistant tuberculosis.

However, there has been delay in the procurement of the GeneXpert TB test machines. States are also facing problems of storage and finances to keep the machines running. There have been reports of out of stock GeneXpert cartridges impeding the functioning of the machines. Therefore, there is a need to develop a comprehensive plan for the deployment of the machines across the country supplementary with adequate financial and operational assistance.