ICMR's first high-altitude medicine research centre – foundation stone laid at Keylong, Himachal Pradesh

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News

Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda laid the foundation stone of the 'ICMR Centre for High Altitude Medicine and Public Health Research' (ICMR-CHAMP) at Keylong, headquarters of Lahaul–Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh (about 3,080 m / 10,000 ft), on 12 Oct 2026. At about ₹36 crore, ICMR's existing Keylong field station will become a permanent year-round centre. Partners include the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS), DRDO and the Himachal government; it will serve both soldiers and civilians, including tribal people.

Key facts

Centre	ICMR-CHAMP – India's first centre for high-altitude medicine and public health
Location	Keylong, Lahaul–Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh (about 3,080 m)
Foundation	12 Oct 2026 – Health Minister J.P. Nadda; ICMR DG Dr Rajiv Bahl
Cost	About ₹36 crore
Research areas	High-altitude physiology, climate-sensitive diseases, maternal and child health, nutrition, mental health, disaster medicine, telemedicine, drone delivery

Background

- ICMR began in 1911 as the Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA) and was renamed ICMR in 1949; it is under the Department of Health Research (DHR, 2007), whose Secretary is also ICMR's Director General.
- High-altitude illness (background): caused by hypoxia – acute mountain sickness (AMS), fluid in the lungs (HAPE) and brain swelling (HACE); immediate descent and oxygen are needed. Air pressure falls as altitude rises.
- Geography: Keylong lies on the Bhaga river; the 'Atal Tunnel' (about 9.02 km, opened Oct 2020) links Manali with Lahaul valley all year – the world's longest highway tunnel above 10,000 ft.

Tamil Nadu link: Chennai hosts two ICMR national institutes – the National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT; begun in 1956 as the Tuberculosis Research Centre) and the National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE).

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