



# President's Message



**Welcome to January-April 2021 Issue**

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A century from now, and on the assumption that we have not become extinct by then, historians will probably term the current century as the “century of viruses and drug-resistant microorganisms”. Despite the arrival of vaccines, COVID-19 is still going strong and will continue to possibly do so, since it is no easy task to inoculate twice around 70% of the nearly 8 billion humans constituting the world population. According to experts, inoculating around 70% of the people of the world will be necessary to develop herd immunity, and then instead of humans the virus will fade away. Is this assumption correct? What happens if the virus SARS-CoV-2 develop mutations, which may make the present vaccines ineffective? Signs of this can already be seen, there are reports that one vaccine is supposedly not very effective against the South African variant of SARS-CoV-2. What is the guarantee that more lethal mutations of the virus will not come in the future? And how long can this cat-mouse game of vaccines-mutations-vaccines go on? Vaccines cannot be developed overnight, so each nation is playing the same game of closing borders and shutting off visitors from outside. The resultant disruption in economy is becoming evident; it has now almost become a choice of death by COVID-19 or death by hunger in the less wealthy countries of the world. Drugs can be an answer to the COVID-19 problem. Asian countries, cumulatively, if one leaves aside the Amazon rain forest, are a source of thousands of diverse plant species, any of which can be instrumental in containing one or more phytochemicals with the ability to cure COVID-19. The problem in Asian countries is not the non-availability of plants or phytochemicals; enough *in silico* studies have shown the presence of possible drug candidates against SARS-CoV-2. The major problem is absence of BioSafety Level 3 (BSL3) virology labs, where anti-viral tests against the COVID-19 virus can be done. Add to this is a seeming absence of cooperation between scientists of the more developed and the less developed countries. That gives rise to a conundrum for the less developed countries have most of the plant species and the more developed countries are lacking in this vital natural resource. A large number of effective modern drugs have come from plants and there is no reason to disbelieve that a drug against COVID-19 cannot be discovered from plants. On behalf of the Asian Society of Pharmacognosy, I entreat for greater cooperation among Asian scientists as well as other scientists from all over the world.