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Swine flu: Firm offers patented machine

Tags: Dharmesh Keswani, AiroCide, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Union health ministry, GWT

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With the global swine flu virus spread seemingly not under control, the Indian distributor of a recently started unique air purification system has approached the government with an invention claimed to stop the infection's spread.

Termed AiroCide, the technology is supposed to eliminate 99.9 per cent of all air-borne micro-organisms, bacteria and pollutants.

It has apparently been developed by scientists at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the US. Great White Technologies is the exclusive Indian licensee for AiroCide Enconditioner (environment conditioning) machines, and it has approached the secretary of the Union health ministry.

It has offered to almost end the problem by installing the unique air management machines in key gateways and public indoor places, in case of an emergency. "We will meet the officials next week to further discuss on this," said Dharmesh Keswani, director of GWT, which started operations in India only two months earlier.

AiroCide has been, it appears, approved by the US Food and Drug Administration, the official regulator there, as an approved medical product with "class-II status".

The technology originated when NASA needed help with food growth experiments as part of extended space flight research. One of NASA's Commercial Space Centres, the Wisconsin Centre for Space Automation and Robotics, along with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, developed the unique photocatalytic oxidation technology that removed a gas called ethylene that makes plants deteriorate.

Research led to development of enconditioning machines, a patented technology with 17 patents, built into a machine called AiroCide, said sources.

The product was improved as a tool to combat bio-terrorism. Apart from preventing the build-up of ethylene, the enconditioning system has the capability of annihilating almost every kind of known virus, micro-organism or pathogens, said Dharmesh Keswani.

Whether swine flu grips India or not, GWT eyes a turnover of Rs 300 crore (Rs 3 billion) in the first year of operation, with estimated sales of about 30,000 units, at an average cost of about Rs 100,000 a machine.

One machine can purify a space of about 4,000 cu ft. Imported from the US, the Indian version of AiroCide will be an adapted version, suiting Indian conditions, he said.




He said about 150 machines were imported to China, when the SARS virus spread there a few years earlier. The machines were also widely used during the anthrax scare in the US.

"In India, we will mainly target hospitals, especially operation theatres, which cause high mortality in India due to hospital acquired infections," said Keswani.

He says luxury hotels, airports and key public places are also potential clients for the technology.

P B Jayakumar in Mumbai

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