

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Media Contacts

Colonel Rohit Dev  
CBO, IISSM  
[cbo@iissm.com](mailto:cbo@iissm.com)

Ms. Srishti Tyagi  
Communication Manager,  
CUNY CREST Institute  
[styagi@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:styagi@ccny.cuny.edu)

### **The CUNY CREST Institute and IISSM Sign a Memorandum of Understanding to Establish Research and Educational Collaboration and Cultural Exchange**

**New York, NY** – On July 30, 2024, The City University of New York (CUNY) Remote Sensing Earth System (CREST) Institute and the International Institute for Security and Safety Management (IISSM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a mutually beneficial research and educational collaboration and cultural exchange initiative that aligns with core missions of both institutions. Dr. Ravindra Kishore Sinha, Executive Chairman, IISSM and past Member of Parliament, Government of India, and Dr. Reza Khanbilvardi, Executive Director, CUNY CREST signed the MoU at the City College of New York in the presence of leadership and team members from both the institutions.



*L-R: Sitting: Dr. Reza Khanbilvardi, CREST Executive Director; Dr. Alexander Couzis, Dean of the Grove School of Engineering; Dr. Ravindra Kishore Sinha, IISSM Executive Chairman; Prof. Santosh Kumar, IISSM CEO. L-R Standing: Dr. Tarendra Lakhankar, CREST Research Scientist; Dr. Mitch Goldberg, CESSRST II Distinguish Research Scientist; Dr. Neal Phillip, Co-Director of CREST International Collaborations*

*Pillar and Associate Director of the Education & Training Pillar; Dr. Fred Moshary, CESSRST II Director; Dr. Shakila Merchant, CUNY CREST HIRES Director; Colonel Rohit Dev, IISSM CBO; Mr. Ali Haider, Ph.D. Candidate, Civil Engineering at CCNY.*

The MoU signing ceremony was also attended virtually by key representatives and experts from both organizations, who expressed their commitment to fostering a collaborative relationship that drives innovation and impact.

Commenting on the collaboration, Dr. Ravindra Kishore Sinha said, “The collaboration with CUNY CREST represents a major step forward in our efforts to build resilient and sustainable communities. By integrating advanced technologies and innovative research, we aim to develop comprehensive strategies that not only prevent losses but also create a safer and more secure environment for future generations.”

Through this partnership, CUNY CREST and IISSM aim to leverage their respective strengths and expertise to advance knowledge, enhance educational opportunities, community engagements and address grand challenges related to key issues pertaining to remote sensing, earth systems, security, disaster management, safety management, climate change, and any other current global issues which could be jointly addressed. This collaboration will include joint research projects, sharing resources, faculty and student exchanges, workshops, webinars, courses, field trips and other cooperative activities designed to promote innovation and excellence in these critical fields as well as foster global skill development and policy advocacy focusing on sustainability. Through these efforts in addressing pressing challenges and preparing the next generation of leaders, enablers, and experts, the institutions will contribute to the betterment of society locally and globally.

Commenting on this occasion, Dr. Shakila Merchant, past Scientist, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI). Govt. of India, and current Deputy Director of CUNY CREST and Founding Director of CUNY HIRES said, “Spearheading this collaboration with IISSM India, brings me closer to home (India) and provides me an opportunity to give back to my community that empowered me with knowledge, training, and experience. This collaboration marks the beginning to remarkable contributions that will empower communities in both countries and beyond”



During their two-day visit to CCNY, Dr. Ravindra Kishore Sinha, Prof. Santosh Kumar and Colonel Rohit Dev, engaged with CCNY leadership and CUNY CREST community including the Dean of Grove School of Engineering Dr. Alex Couzis, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Dr. Ardie Walser, CCNY students, faculty, scientists, and management. They learnt about CREST and IISSM capabilities, portfolio, engagements and visited facilities CUNY CREST Satellite Receiving Station (SRS) and LIDAR, Ocean and Coastal Monitoring facilities within the Optical Remote Sensing Labs, and had the opportunity to see first-hand CUNY CREST’s research and education capabilities. They also enthusiastically interacted with high school students who are currently undergoing training, as part of the CUNY CREST Summer Bridge Initiative in advanced Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields and conducting cutting edge research through the High School Initiative in Remote Sensing of the Earth Systems Engineering and Sciences (HIRES) program led by Dr. Shakila Merchant. Dr. Sinha and Prof Kumar

addressed the high schoolers and encouraged them to pursue their passion. The visit concluded with a round table discussion on the scope of future collaborations and finalization of the signed MoU.

Expressing his gratitude, Dr. Reza Khanbilvardi said, “We are delighted to join forces with IISSM. This partnership will enable us to translate cutting-edge research into practical solutions that can save lives and protect communities from the adverse effects of disasters and climate change.”

Prof. Santosh Kumar, said, “This MoU marks a significant milestone in our mission to advance safety and security standards globally. By partnering with the CUNY CREST, we are positioned to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time, including disaster management and climate change.” He also added that this collaboration will lead to a transformation in how we approach these issues by incorporating cutting-edge technologies such as space science, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. These advanced tools will enhance our capabilities in security, safety, and disaster management, and contribute significantly towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”



*Dr. Ravindra Kishore Sinha, Prof. Santosh Kumar, and Dr. Shakila Merchant with the 2024 CUNY CREST HIRES students and Dr. Brian Vant-Hull, HIRES Remote Sensing Instructor and CREST Research Scientist*

By combining IISSM's extensive experience in security and safety management with CUNY CREST's leading research capabilities in climate change and environmental sciences, this collaboration aims to mitigate risks and minimize losses caused by natural and human-made disasters. Both institutions are optimistic and look forward to a productive partnership that benefits them and the states/countries they represent.

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For more details about this collaboration, contact Dr. Shakila Merchant, Founding Director, CUNY HIRES (USA) at [smerchant@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:smerchant@ccny.cuny.edu), Dr. Reza Khanbilvardi Executive Director of CUNY CREST (USA), [khanbilvardi@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:khanbilvardi@ccny.cuny.edu), and Prof. Santosh Kumar, CEO, IISSM (India) at [profsantosh@gmail.com](mailto:profsantosh@gmail.com) and Colonel Rohit Dev, CBO, IISSM (India) at [cbo@iissm.com](mailto:cbo@iissm.com).

## **CUNY CREST Institute**

The CUNY CREST was institutionalized in 2010 and approved by the CUNY Board of Trustees. It is a coalition of interdisciplinary researchers across the CUNY system, with a global reach, who are passionate about addressing grand societal challenges by advancing earth system sciences, social science, and environmental justice, through applications of a suite of ground-based and satellite-based remote sensing technologies, raising awareness, engaging secondary & postsecondary students and community outreach. CREST is headquartered at T-107, Steinman Hall, 140th St. & Convent Ave., New York, NY 10031, USA. For more information, [click here](#).

## **IISSM**

IISSM is a Premier Global Sustainable Skilling and Workforce Management Institute of India, established in 1990 and formally registered in 1992 under Society Registration Act 21, 1860; imparting training, audit, assessment, consultancy and facilitating employment. The institute trains and enables citizens in the field of Security, ESG, HSSE, DEI, GESI, Loss Prevention, Risk Management, Fire Safety, Disaster Management, Climate Change, Renewable Energy, Defense & Paramilitary, International Workforce Immigration and all Industries in Public and Private Sectors. IISSM is headquartered at E-1, East of Kailash, New Delhi, India 110065. For more information, [click here](#).