COVID-19 pandemic has created a challenging situation across the globe irrespective of the region. India has also been taking various measures to combat COVID-19 since the reporting of the first case. Since the beginning, ICMR has not only worked on strategy for preventing the spread and timely treatment but also ensured that the desired facilities are available on the ground.

ICMR has emphasized on increasing awareness, use of mask, sanitizers and social distancing for prevention. Not only this, but we also took cognizance of effective medicines and conducted thorough research and shared the information with doctors across the country. ICMR took important steps to help the Ministry of Health in issuing guidelines for COVID-19 testing. As a result of this, RT-PCR, Sero Survey, Elisa Test and Antigen Rapid tests are being used across the country for combating the outbreak of COVID-19. We established a chain of over 1000 testing labs. Currently, every district has at least a COVID testing lab.

Taking inspiration from Hon’ble PM Narendra Modi, ICMR established a vision to help people in need. ICMR is committed to extending its help to the last person in the queue and thus it is working relentlessly for the last six months to meet its objective.
ICMR sets up a network of 1000 corona test labs across India

- Testing Capacity increased to over two lakh per day
- Over 73,52,000 tests conducted till June 23
- Country becomes ‘Aatmnirbhar’ in Masks, PPE Kits and Sanitizers
- India can now export these medical products

To prevent and control the outbreak of COVID-19, ICMR has been assigning greater priority to more labs and more tests. This is the reason that India now has over 1000 ICMR recognized labs. This helped in increasing India’s testing capacity and till June 23, over 73 lakh samples were already tested. Our efforts to fight corona is on. We have made safety, prevention and treatment a weapon in this fight and ICMR is doing a commendable job by broadening the horizon of these tools. ICMR has ensured the availability of tests and medicines to stop the spread of COVID-19 while it has focussed on awareness for prevention. By this way, it has carved a new dimension in its fight against COVID-19.

After establishing labs in every district, ICMR is now working to augment the testing capacity across the country. The number of labs across India has crossed 1,000 and the testing capacity has been increased to over 2 lakhs per day. One can understand the gravity of ICMR’s efforts from only this fact that it has established a COVID-19 testing lab at a height of 18,000 feet in Ladakh. Setting up of COVID testing lab in the remotest corner of the country is an apt example of ICMR’s commitment.

Besides lab, ICMR along with other S&T agencies has contributed immensely in making India self-reliant when it comes to PPE Kits, Masks, Sanitizers and Medicines. India was struggling to meet the demands of masks, PPE kits, sanitizers etc during the early stage of COVID-19 outbreak and was forced to import these items. ICMR took cognisance of this challenge and worked to reverse the situation. Due to ICMR’s effort, India is now in a position to export these items.

Testing plays a key role in the fight against Corona. Keeping this in mind, ICMR has already certified over 1000 labs across India for COVID-19 testing.
A state-of-the-art COVID-19 testing machine has been installed at Patna’s Rajendra Memorial Medical Science Research Institute (RMRIMS) to expedite the testing of samples. ICMR said that this machine named COBAS 6800 can test up to 1500 samples per day, which will help speed up the testing at the Patna facility.

This robotic machine reduces the risk of infection among health workers as it can be operated with very limited human intervention. Prof. Balram Bhargava, Director General, ICMR said, “This is the first of its kind facility in Bihar and will help in capacity building of COVID-19 diagnostic laboratory in the institute.”

Prof. Bhargava said that the move will help increase the testing capacity in Bihar as the state needs higher testings given the return of migrant workers from different parts of the country.

Presently, the RMRIMS is testing around 2,000 samples per day with the help of 4 RT-PCR machines, with a team of 25 people working round the clock in three shifts. So far, 65,000 samples of COVID-19 have been tested at this institute.

Once COVID-19 is under control, this machine can be used to detect pathogens such as Hepatitis B and C, HIV, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB), *Cytomegalovirus* (CMV), *Chlamydia, Neisseria* and Dengue.

Since COBAS 6800 machine requires very limited human intervention, its use will help control the spread of the COVID-19, thus protecting the healthcare officials. This is the first of its kind facility in Bihar and will enhance the COVID-19 testing capacity of the institute. Through this machine, the results can be seen on the computer screen and the report can be printed directly.
Adoption of test, track and treat strategy

The role of ICMR in the fight against COVID-19 is becoming even more important with each passing day. Adopting Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of testing, tracking, treating, ICMR has ramped up its efforts to provide new means of prevention, testing and treatment. Not only in urban areas, but ICMR has also done exceptional work for setting up of COVID test labs, providing medicines and research in remote corners of the country. The aim of ICMR is to continuously increase the testing capacity of COVID-19 so that infection can be detected as soon as possible, thus helping in controlling the outbreak.

ICMR approves antigen testing in Delhi

Given the rapid increase of COVID-19 cases in Delhi, ICMR immediately tested, certified and approved for conducting antigen testing in Delhi. Within 24 hours of getting the approval, the antigen testing of COVID-19 started in Delhi. On the very first day, more than 7,000 samples were examined and their reports were handed out on the same day. Reflecting the vision of ICMR, Director-General Balaram Bhargava wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary of most of the state for increasing the testing. ICMR believes that despite progress in testing, the need for early diagnosis and testing will be required in all parts of the country. That is the reason that ICMR has been searching for an alternate, quick and reliable option to test COVID-19 and is continuously working in this direction.

Security personnel deployed in Puri Rath Yatra tested for COVID-19

ICMR’s Bhubaneswar Center played an important role in conducting Puri’s famous Rath Yatra safely. ICMR completed the blood samples testing of 933 sevaks and police personnel deployed in the Rath Yatra in a record time of 6 hours. After this, only those people were allowed to participate in Rath Yatra whose blood samples were found negative. ICMR team extended its full support for the smooth completion of the grand festival of Odisha. The entire temple was also sanitized before taking out the Rath Yatra.

Notably, Lord Jagannath’s Rath Yatra involves millions of people from all over the world every year. However, due to COVID-19 outbreak this year, the yatra was carried out without devotees. This is the first time in the history of this famous Rath yatra that it was held without the presence of devotees. It may be noted that the Hon’ble Supreme Court had given permission to the state government with some conditions to take out the 7-day long Rath Yatra. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind also wished the people for Rath Yatra.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, “My heartiest greetings to all of you on the auspicious occasion of Lord Jagannath’s Rath Yatra. I wish that this journey filled with reverence and devotion bring happiness, prosperity, good luck and health to the lives of the countrymen. Jai Jagannath!” President Ram Nath Kovind tweeted, “Greetings to everyone on the auspicious occasion of Rath Yatra, especially to the devotees of Lord Jagannath in Odisha. May the Lord bless us with courage and determination in our fight against COVID-19 and bring us good health and joy.”
ICMR Approves Antigen COVID-19 Testing Kit With Result In 30 Minutes

For past three months, ICMR has been taking this battle against corona towards a decisive direction on the basis of continuous research and experiments. ICMR has been a notable contributor to these three genres- firstly, awareness for prevention, followed by test for quick identification of infection and drug for the infection. Wherever you are, with the help of this test your corona test will be done and you will get report in half an hour. ICMR has also issued guidelines for this. Testing is the biggest challenge in the fight against Corona. Antigen test will overcome this problem to a great extent.

So far, RT-PCR test is the only method for accurate testing of the corona. In India, ICMR has approved several RT-PCR tests which take 2 to 5 hours to give results along with the time required to take the sample to the testing center. Use of the antigen kit will prove to be very effective in containment and buffer zones. Large-scale testing and immediate results will make it easier to identify and isolate the infected, which is the most important step to prevent corona virus’ spread.

Free training to employees for corona testing

On 17th March ICMR fixed the maximum limit of corona examination in private labs at Rs 4500 in order to make the corona test accessible to the common man and people in need. Initially, test kits were imported but when the production started in India itself then ICMR suggested the removal of fee restriction. ICMR advised the states to discuss with private labs and come to a mutual understanding on rates of corona test. Today, corona tests are being conducted in about 1000 labs across the country. It is also a matter of great importance that the Central and State Governments have taken several precautionary measures to prevent the epidemic, following ICMR’s suggestion seriously.

Private laboratories get ICMR’s nod to conduct coronavirus tests

The ICMR had previously decided that having the right information is very important to protect against Corona. Only then its spread can be stopped. This required a greater number of corona tests. In the early stages of Corona, this test was only possible in a government lab. But as a precaution keeping in mind increasing corona infections in the country, ICMR approved private labs to investigate the corona virus in March itself, with some conditions. This proved to be a very effective step in the war against Corona. Corona Testing Lab in all states of the country was one of the important steps being taken by ICMR. These include those remote areas too where travelling is also difficult. ICMR has established Corona Lab at an altitude of 18 thousand feet in Leh. Not only this, health workers are being given free training to conduct tests.

Joint research of ICMR and WHO for finding cure of Corona

Whole world is trying to find out cure for corona but no one has been successful yet. The joint team of ICMR and WHO is researching on three major drugs regarding this i.e, US-based company Gilead Pharma’s Remedesivir, the HIV drug, and hydroxychloroquine. In the early stages, Remedisivir has demonstrated some efficacy. This has raised some hope for ICMR. Covid-19 is a virus belonging to the group of SARS. So, this drug may prove effective for the treatment of corona.

ICMR believes that more than four doses of the anti-malarial drug Hydroxychloroquine prophylaxis can reduce corona virus infection. In one important study, health workers were given six or more doses of hydroxychloroquine when tending to corona infected patients. To review the risk and protective factors of corona virus infection among health workers in India, ICMR researchers conducted a case control investigation. The findings of the study are published in the latest issue of the Indian Journal of Medical Research.
ICMR guarded India against Corona havoc

When COVID-19 attacked whole world our sole purpose was to save our lives i.e ‘Jaan hai to Jahan hai’. But after few months this fight has taken a new shape and now we have to learn to survive with this until we find a permanent solution for COVID. Now, our motto is ‘Jaan bhi jahan bhi’. In this fight against COVID-19 the government and non-governmental organizations have worked tremendously. Their united efforts are praiseworthy in itself. ICMR has played the most important and crucial role in this war against Corona virus. This organisation is trying its best to minimize deaths and control fatality rate.

A larger number of migrant workers were mobilising in from the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat towards Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal. So particularly, a strategy was formulated for monitoring, investigation and treatment in these states. In this, ICMR insisted on building more and more laboratories and trained health staff to carry out these tests with the help of state governments. ICMR is continuously working in this direction so that affected and infected people get treatment at the right time and death rate can be curbed.

Taking cognizance of these conditions, Modi government took an early decision and announced relief packages one after the other. These relief packages were implemented on the ground with immediate effect and brought relief to the countrymen. State governments played a crucial and decisive role in this campaign and made sure that everyone gets benefitted from this. For instance, the strategy of Yogi Government in Uttar Pradesh was well planned to regulate these relief packages. Other states also acted upon with full responsibility and took all possible steps to keep the people safe.

In Madhya Pradesh, CM Shivraj Singh Chauhan has also made a significant contribution to this war against Corona by implementing these plans in mission mode. Now anyone in state can get themselves checked in their own area. This has led to a meaningful effort to cover the transition within a single radius. As a result, the number of treated people has increased.

ICMR strengthened the country to fight the war against Covid-19, this is clearly reflected by the efforts of institution. Corona Testing Lab has been established in remote areas of the country. ICMR also demonstrated its superior functionality by setting up a Corona Testing Lab at an altitude of 18 thousand feet in Leh. The institution has so far established 1000 Corona Testing Lab in the country. These include areas where it is difficult to even travel. With the establishment of Corona Testing Lab in every district, ICMR has expanded the capacity of testing at state level. This has strengthened our ongoing war against Corona. With the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and the awareness of citizens, we will surely win this war against Corona epidemic.

Prof. Balram Bhargava, Secretary DHR and Director-General, ICMR
Ladakh gets its first COVID-19 laboratory at a height of 18 thousand feet

The first COVID-19 laboratory was set up on 26 May in the Union Territory of Ladakh. The state-of-the-art biosafety level 2 (BSL-2) laboratory was inaugurated at Chuchot Yokma by Member of Parliament, Ladakh Jamyang Tsering Namgyal in presence of Chief Executive Councilor, LAHDC Leyal Gyal P Wangyal. Director of Health Services in Ladakh, Dr. Phuntsog Angchuk, Medical Superintendent SNM Hospital Leh, Dr. Tracinga Sampel, Dr. Kunjung Chosdol and laboratory staff were also present on the occasion. Setting up of the laboratory at a height of 18 thousand feet was indeed a challenging task for ICMR. But the organisation took this challenge and successfully established the laboratory.

This is the first molecular laboratory in the region, which will be used for testing HIV, Tuberculosis, Swine flu, and Hepatitis-B after COVID-19 pandemic is over. There is a long-term plan of upgrading it to test genetic disease, cancer markers and research. Dr. Angchuk said that the laboratory has met all the parameters and it has been dedicated to the public only after successfully completing all standardization tests. Reporting shall be done after permission from ICMR in a few days. As much as 20-30 tests will be conducted in the initial days which will gradually increase with the proficiency as well as the increase in the number of staff, Angchuk said.

Earlier, the samples had to be sent to Delhi by flights leading to delays and heavy expenditure. The COVID-19 testing laboratory, first such facility in the union territory, was set up with the help of Pernod Ricard India foundation. The new laboratory is a fully equipped facility compliant with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) standards. It would enable the administration to understand the scale of the disease spread, gauge preparedness of the local healthcare system and enforce pre-emptive measures. This laboratory, which has been commissioned in Ladakh, will help in the investigation and prevention of corona virus here. This laboratory will be used to examine the public and soldiers.
Patron

Prof. (Dr.) Balram Bhargava
Secretary DHR and Director-General, ICMR

Communication Team

Dr. Rajni Kant
Director, ICMR-RMRC, Gorakhpur and Scientist G & Head, Research Management, Policy, Planning and Communications

Dr. Lokesh Kumar Sharma
Scientist E, Social Media & Media Coordinator, Communications Unit
Informatics Systems & Research Management Division

Dr. Enna Dogra Gupta
Scientist C, Content Coordinator, Communications Unit

Supported by:
Aakhya India (Media Consultant to ICMR)

CONTACT US

Indian Council of Medical Research
V. Ramalingaswami Bhawan, P.O. Box No. 4911
Ansari Nagar, New Delhi - 110029, India
Ph: 91-11-26588895 / 91-11-26588980, 91-11-26589794 / 91-11-26589336, 91-11-26588707
Fax: 91-11-26588662