

India and Sri Lanka to work together on SARS-CoV-2

New Delhi, 15 June, India Science Wire:

India and Sri Lanka have joined hands to scale up the genome surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 in the two countries with a network of satellite MicroLabs. The collaboration between the two countries aims to expand Genome Surveillance Program for SARS-CoV-2 with support from Wellcome Trust. Facilitated by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, Wellcome Trust has agreed to provide funding to a researchers' consortium from India and Sri Lanka – led by CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB), India, and the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Due to the evolution of new and more transmissible variants of SARS-CoV-2, their faster spread and impact on the effectiveness of the approved diagnostic tests and vaccines against COVID-19 has been a big concern. As these variants pose a risk to the success of the global pandemic response efforts researchers from the two neighbouring nations will strengthen the genomic surveillance and epidemiology capacity by setting up an integrated, scalable hub-and-spoke model of distributed clusters of sequencing. The existing MegaLabs will support MicroLabs setting up in tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

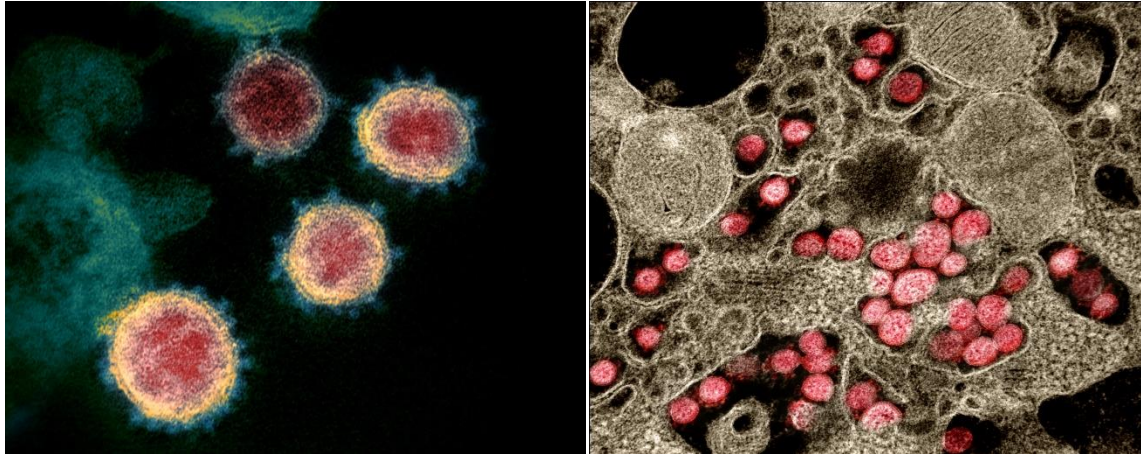
This model will reduce the time from getting a positive test to sequence, as well as time from sequence to public data deposit. Such an outcome, in turn, will enable researchers to use the data for improving diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics and help relevant authorities to frame appropriate health policy decisions on time.

“I estimate that we can shave three weeks off current timelines by establishing large, high-throughput sequencing hubs, alongside smaller, distributed ‘spokes’ that perform rapid but low-throughput sequencing, and by improving logistics for integrating results from samples with clinical data,” wrote Dr. Anurag Agrawal, Director, CSIR-IGIB in his article published for Nature earlier this month explaining about the hub-and-spoke model.

The research consortium will also establish technical coordination with WHO-SEARO's regional reference lab for genomic sequencing to streamline the terms of engagement and ensure overall synchronization. In addition, standardized lab skills and training curriculum would be designed to help build the capacity of researchers and partners in both countries.

ISW/RM/ENG/10/06/2021

Keywords: Science, Technology, India, Sri Lanka, MOU, Corona, Covid-19, SARS COV-2, Pandemic, worldwide, , Research, Nature, IGIB, Colombo University, Genome Surveillance, Hub and Spoke Model, Consortium.



A symbolic picture of SARS Cov-2 Virus (Photo: [Creative Commons](#))