

New mobile lab launched to expand COVID-19 testing in remote areas

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New Delhi, June 18 (India Science Wire): Amidst ever-increasing cases of coronavirus, efforts are being made to speed up testing of suspects of COVID-19 carriers, especially in the interior parts of the country. In one such initiative, a mobile diagnostic unit I-Lab (Infectious disease diagnostic lab) has been launched on Thursday by Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Science and Technology, Health and Family Welfare and Earth Sciences. The I-Lab is expected to help in the expansion of COVID-19 testing in remote areas.

I-lab is a Biosafety Level (BSL)-2 facility with on-site enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), RT-PCR, and Bio chemistry analysers. It can run 50 RT-PCR reactions and about 200 ELISA in a day. Double set of machines can help increase the capacity to about 500 per day in 8 hours shift, said Dr. Harsh Vardhan.

A unique feature of this mobile testing lab is its utility in diagnosing other infectious diseases beyond the COVID-19 period. Additional test for other diseases for TB, HIV, etc. will be priced as per CGHS rates. These labs will be provided to the regional/city hubs and they will deploy them further in the interior, inaccessible parts of the region.

I-Lab, the first lab of its kind in the country, has been developed jointly by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Andhra Pradesh Med-tech Zone (AMTZ), Asia's first medical equipment manufacturing ecosystem.

DBT and AMTZ have initiated the DBT-AMTZ COMManD (COVID Medtech Manufacturing Development) Consortia to address the shortage of critical healthcare technologies in India and move progressively towards a stage of self-sufficiency. Under this Consortia, India's first I-lab (infectious disease diagnostic lab) has been built at AMTZ in record time of 8 days from the date of receipt of Automotive Chassis, from Bharat Benz.

This mobile unit can be deployed in remote areas and can be lifted from Automotive Chassis and can be put on goods train for sending it to any location in the country. The BSL-2 Lab is as per the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) specification and is being attached to DBT's certified testing centres. **(India Science Wire)**

