

## DBT-CDFD tests over 8,500 COVID 19 samples in Telangana

New Delhi, July 27: The Department of Biotechnology's Centre for Disease Diagnosis and DNA Fingerprinting (DBT-CDFD) has entered into a memorandum of understanding with Nizam Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) for a joint project on genomic analysis of SARS-CoV-2 sequence in Indian patients.



The Hyderabad-based premier scientific institute, which is involved in COVID-19 testing for samples from Telangana, has also so far tested over 8,500 samples. It had started testing on COVID 19 samples on 18th April after due approval from DBT and Indian Council of Medical Research.

It was nominated by the Office of Director, Medical Education, Govt of Telangana along with CSIR-CCMB and ESIC as a centre for pooling of samples from selected districts of Telangana with less than 2% prevalence of COVID positive cases. Subsequent to an advisory issued by ICMR on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020, notifying that it has no objection to initiation of COVID-19 testing in laboratories operating under the Department of Biotechnology, CDFD had re-organised the infrastructure to create a designated COVID-19 testing laboratory, procured testing kits and personal protective equipment, and trained the manpower. Senior scientists-Drs. Ashwin Dalal, Murali Bashyam, Rashna Bhandari and Harinarayanan are supervising and providing leadership to the task with support from the staff and students. Volunteers were trained at CSIR-CCMB and Osmania Medical College Koti, Hyderabad to conduct RNA preparation and RT-PCR analysis of samples received from different regions of Telangana.

It has, among other things, drawn up a detailed standard operating procedures for the COVID-19 testing facility set up at its campus. The document has been prepared based on inputs from different recommendations by the World Health Organisation, United State's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the handbook prepared by the office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India for COVID-19 testing in research laboratories.

It covers all aspects beginning from how the security guard of the Institute must receive the vehicle carrying samples at the entrance to the building to how the samples will be analysed and a report sent to the office of the district medical and health officer of the district from where the specific sample had come. It also gives clear protocol for how the biohazardous waste produced in the process should be handled and disposed of, how to sanitise the work and how to protect those engaged in the analysis from getting exposed to the virus.

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