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Subject-Enhancement of Testing Capacity-Reg

Dear Colleagues

As you are already aware, prevalence of COVID-19 has been increasing in the country and current scenario is further challenged by opening up of various economic activities. 1.18 crore COVID-19 tests have been performed in the Country in more than the 1200 COVID-19 testing labs approved by ICMR. We take this opportunity to appreciate all the efforts made by the State Governments to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the evolving scenario demands for enhanced testing capabilities to handle any surge in testing demand.

2. **Increasing the testing capacity** may be achieved by a) adding more labs for COVID-19 testing and b) enhancing the existing testing capacity of the approved labs. In this regard, a strategy to enhance the COVID-19 testing in the Country has been devised, which requires a **coordinated effort from the State Governments** as well as various Departments of Central Government and scientific bodies such as ICAR, DBT, DST and DSIR under the Union Government.

3. In this context, the following are suggested for your consideration and immediate necessary action to facilitate an increase in the testing capacity for COVID-19 in the country:

Short term measures

- a) RT-PCR machines available with the research and educational institutions under the ambit of State and Central Government be temporarily deployed in the District Hospitals and testing labs, so that each of these government labs have an additional machine. The **State Governments are requested to prepare a roadmap** for such redeployment by factoring in the manpower requirements.
- b) There are **281 Government medical colleges approved by MCI** and at present 263 have been approved for testing by ICMR. The remaining 12 Government medical colleges can also be approved for testing by making available 2 RT PCR machines, other ancillary equipment and trained staff. There are **261 Private Medical Colleges** recognised by MCI. Out of these 76 have been approved for testing and another 185 Private medical colleges with 2 RT PCR machines can be added to the testing network. The States shall immediately send the request for their registration as per the criteria of ICMR mentioned in the link provided.

[https://www.icmr.gov.in/pdf/covid/labs/Criteria for initiation additional COVID19 testing laboratories.pdf](https://www.icmr.gov.in/pdf/covid/labs/Criteria%20for%20initiation%20additional%20COVID19%20testing%20laboratories.pdf)

- c) The States/UTs may **urgently procure rapid antigen kits** to enhance their testing potential. These kits are available on GeM portal for ease of access, procurement and cost efficiency.
- d) Addition of **private diagnostic labs with 2 RT PCR machines** each will enhance the capacity by 48000 tests per day. The State Governments must endeavour to add at least 5 Labs per State into the network.

Medium Term measures

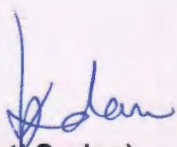
- a) Each Government lab should have at least 2 RT PCR machines and 1 automated RNA extraction machine. Of the approved Govt. labs for testing, in 123 labs, there is only 1 RT PCT machine, therefore 123 RT PCR machines need to be procured for these labs **immediately**. This will enhance the capacity by 29,520 tests per day
- b) The **District hospitals need to be provided with BSL-II facility**, with at least 1 RT PCR machine. This facility if provided in at least 600 districts especially where there are more than 200 beds, will enhance the capacity by 1.1 Lakhs.
- c) Out of 391 government labs there are 70 labs with automated RNA extraction platforms. ICMR is procuring 125 automated RNA extraction machines. **If one automated RNA extraction** is provided to every government lab (procurement of another 200 machines) by the State Governments testing capacity will increase by 90000 tests per day. The State governments may also procure these machines on their own from **GeM**.

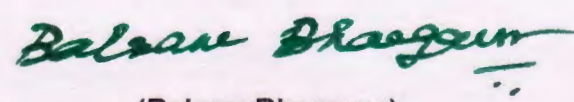
4. While assuring our continued assistance and facilitation for COVID-19 testing across the States/UTs, a schedule for implementation of the above strategic interventions is enclosed for immediate implementation. We are sure, that you will find this strategy for enhancing COVID-19 testing very pragmatic and highly complementing to the need of the hour to strengthen our battle to control COVID-19 in the country.

Encl: As above.

With kind regards

Yours Sincerely


(Preeti Sudan)
Secretary, HFW


(Balram Bhargava)
Secretary, DHR / DG, ICMR

To

**The Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary
Secretary (Health & Family welfare)
All States/UTs**