

Pandemic COVID-19 crisis: Timely diagnostic service rendered by ICAR-ICFMD

India is confronting the challenge of pandemic COVID-19 bravely with the help of its COVID warriors. In these unprecedented crisis hours, timely diagnosis of infection is pivotal to the ‘test-track-treat’ mechanism of containing the disease. It was 16th May 2020 – when the COVID-19 cases in the country were on a surge and death toll was scary in the European countries and the USA – that on the request of Government of Odisha and the approval of ICAR and ICMR, RT-PCR testing to detect nCoV-2 genome in swab samples referred from various districts of Odisha commenced in the BSL-3 Containment Laboratory of International Centre for FMD (ICFMD) under ICAR-Directorate of Foot and Mouth Disease (ICAR-DFMD), Arugul, Bhubaneswar. A small group of 8 young scientists - under the initiative, guidance, and motivation of former Director (Acting) Dr R. K. Singh - joined hands to contribute to this noble cause. The dedicated ICFMD COVID testing team at present comprises Mr S. Z. Ali, Dr B. R. Prusty, Dr (Ms) S. R. Mallick, Dr J. K. Biswal, Dr R. Ranjan, Dr S. S. Dahiya, Dr M. Rout, Dr N. R. Sahoo and Dr J. K. Mohapatra (Nodal Officer). Gradually, the testing team got expanded with the active participation of scientists, vets, students from other ICAR Institutes such as ICAR-CIFA, ICAR-NRRI, ICAR-CARI, and ADRI, FARD, Govt. of Odisha, and OUAT. The testing activity at ICFMD is coordinated by Prof. (Dr) P K Agarwal, Hon’ble Vice Chancellor, OUAT, Bhubaneswar and supported by the Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Odisha.

As of today, the ICFMD COVID testing team has crossed 32,000 mark in terms of samples tested by RT-PCR. So far, samples from seven districts such as Puri, Gajapati, Khordha, Nayagarh, Boudh, Sonapur and Nuapada have been received and tested at ICFMD. The Institute’s timely contribution towards COVID-19 diagnostic service saw the famous ‘Puri Rathayatra’ conducted safely. Presently, ICFMD stands next to IVRI, among the four ICAR Institutes involved in COVID testing and fourth among the establishments in the state in terms of the volume of samples tested so far by RT-PCR.



The light at the end of the tunnel is yet to be seen. However, the valiant selfless team is marching ahead relentlessly under the leadership of Director (Acting) Dr B. P. Mishra and will continue to contribute till the invisible enemy surrenders convincingly. It's a battle that is being fought on multiple fronts, starting from the policy makers to Anganwadi workers at the grass root level. ICAR-DFMD-ICFMD salutes the indomitable spirit and valor of each and every COVID warrior!