Consortium of four Indian cities funded for enhanced coronavirus genome surveillance

Hyderabad, 10th Jun, 2021: A consortium of four city clusters – Bangalore, Hyderabad, New Delhi and Pune – has been established to upscale SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus genomic surveillance, complementing national efforts led by INSACOG. The consortium is established with generous support and seed funding from Rockefeller Foundation. The new effort will track the emergence of viral variants correlated to epidemiological dynamics and clinical outcomes. The consortium aims to develop targeted sampling strategies based on granular epidemiological and clinical data. Coupled with intense environmental surveillance and advanced computational techniques, the consortium would also focus on building capabilities for real-time surveillance and epidemiology.

The consortium is led by CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB), Hyderabad and currently includes different partners in three other cities: NCBS-TIFR, InStem-DBT and NIMHANS in Bengaluru; CSIR-IGIB in New Delhi; Pune Knowledge Cluster, IISER-Pune and CSIR-NCL in Pune. It will work closely with local governments, hospitals and clinicians. In collaboration with INSACOG, the consortium aims to eventually make this a national effort by expanding to other strategic locations in India.

Dr Rakesh Mishra, Advisor at CSIR-CCMB will lead these efforts along with Prof Satyajit Mayor, NCBS, Prof LS Shashidhara, Pune Knowledge Cluster and Dr Anurag Agrawal, CSIR-IGIB. The team says, "Our aim is to develop strategies and capabilities to identify Variants of Concern before they spread widely and cause outbreaks. This will also help correlate with clinical symptoms and disease severity, potentially associated with emerging variants."

Dr Vinay Nandicoori, Director, CSIR-CCMB adds, "All the partner institutes have been fighting COVID-19 since its very beginning in the country. This much-needed collaboration will bring all their strengths together in a structured fashion."