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Govt dedicates COBAS 6800 machine for COVID-19 testing

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Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare visited the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and dedicated the COBAS 6800 testing machine to the nation. This is the first such testing machine that has been procured by the Government for testing of COVID-19 cases and is installed at the National Centre for Disease Control.

The Union Health Minister also visited the Control Room and the Testing Laboratories, and reviewed the current status of COVID-19 testing with Dr S K Singh, Director (NCDC) and senior officials.

Highlighting the achievements in ramping up the testing capability, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said, “We have now developed a capacity to conduct 1,00,000 tests per day. Today marks an important milestone as we have tested nearly 20 lakh tests for COVID-19 mark at more than 500 laboratories including 359 Government laboratories and 145 private laboratories in the country”.

He further added, “NCDC has been now equipped with the COBAS 6800, a fully automated, high end machine for performing real time PCR testing COVID-19 in the service of nation. COBAS 6800 will provide quality, high-volume testing with a high throughput of test around 1200 samples in 24 hours. It will largely increase the testing capacity with reduction in pendency.”

Highlighting its other features, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that COBAS 6800 is a sophisticated machine enabled with robotics that minimizes the chance of contamination as well as the risk of infection to the health care workers since it can be operated remotely with limited human intervention. As the machine requires a minimum BSL2+ containment level for testing, it cannot be placed at just any facility. COBAS 6800 can also detect other pathogens like Viral Hepatitis B & C, HIV, MTb (both rifampicin and isoniazide resistance), Papilloma, CMV, Chlamydia, Neiserreia etc.

The Union Health Minister emphasised on the quality and sturdiness of the community surveillance and contact tracing.