

Covid-19: New sample testing rule may delay local PPE production

The four laboratories that test the kits already have a large backlog of samples to be tested, and getting the affidavit physically from some of the manufacturers to the labs could take several days with the country in lockdown, according to Preventive Wear Manufacturers Association of India chair Sanjiiv Rehlan.

By Teena Thacker

New Delhi: Indian manufacturers of personal protective equipment (PPE) have flagged a new government rule, which makes a notarised affidavit from them compulsory for testing of PPE samples, as a hurdle in quickly ramping up production of the kits used by health workers that are in short supply.

The four laboratories that test the kits already have a large backlog of samples to be tested, and getting the affidavit physically from some of the manufacturers to the labs could take several days with the country in lockdown, according to Preventive Wear Manufacturers Association of India chair Sanjiiv Rehlan. The delay in getting approvals could lead to substandard PPE kits getting into the market with fake certifications, he said.

As per the textile ministry's order, government-approved laboratories would accept the samples only on submission of a notarised affidavit from the manufacturer, taking responsibility of quality, agreeing to face legal action, including criminal prosecution, if the products are found to be not meeting the minimum technical requirement and certifying that they are not traders and have all approvals. The unique certification code issued by the labs should form the basis for placement of orders by HLL Lifecare, which is the nodal agency for acquiring PPEs, according to the order dated April 22.

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"Even after having four functional labs in India to check the garment as per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare guidelines, we are not finding any solutions to clear the shortages ... The sample submitted on 18th April is yet to get clear, such is the situation," Preventive Wear Manufacturers of India chairman Sanjiiv Rehlan said.

The labs of Defence Research and Development Organisation in Delhi, South India Textile Research Association in Coimbatore and Ordnance Factory Board in Muradnagar and Kanpur are the approved labs for the testing. The kits are distributed to various agencies only after they pass stringent quality tests. A PPE kit contains a full-body suit, masks, goggles, gloves, and shoe covers.

The DRDO laboratory in Delhi has 900 samples pending for testing.

DRDO Life Sciences director General AK Singh said efforts were ongoing to speed up testing.

"Every sample takes two hours to be tested. Earlier we had only one machine; now we have two more machines which we have got fabricated locally and we are hoping that the speed of samples getting tested will increase," he said.

Rehlan said the delay in getting the samples tested would trigger the sale of substandard kits. He said some of the association's members had submitted the affidavits, but the reports of the tests

were still awaited. “Samples of manufacturers from Mumbai and Raipur are still pending because their affidavits will take another 4-5 days to reach Delhi,” he said.

India wants 1 million coveralls and goggles, 4 million N-95 masks, 2 million nitrile gloves, 600,000 face shields and 2 million triple-layer surgical masks among other items, according to a March 24 tender document. It has imported PPE kits from China, Singapore and South Korea in order to meet its requirements.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/covid-19-new-sample-testing-rule-may-delay-local-ppe-production/articleshow/75462513.cms>



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New Covid-19 sample collection lab

Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister of India, dedicated the first COVID-19 sample collection mobile lab of the country — Mobile BSL-3 VRDL Lab.

This lab has been developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Ministry of Defence, Government of India, in collaboration with ESIC Medical College and Hospital, Sanathnagar (Hyderabad) with due permission of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Government of Telangana.

Speaking on the occasion, Rajnath Singh appreciated the efforts of DRDO and ESIC in setting up of this Bio-Safety Level 2 and Level 3 lab in a record time of 15 days, which usually takes about six months time. He further said, “This testing facility can process more than 1,000 samples in a day and will enhance country’s capabilities in fighting COVID-19.”

Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Labour Minister, Government of India, also complemented DRDO and ESIC for developing the mobile testing lab in a very short time. He said, “It’s a very important step in our fight against Coronavirus.”

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/vivacity/new-covid-19-sample-collection-lab.html>





Thu, 30 April 2020

India's Next-Gen AMCA Fighter Jet should have local engines – IAF to DRDO

The air force is likely to insist on a clause for development of an indigenous aero engine when it clears a multi-billion dollar programme to go ahead with the next generation Advanced Multirole Combat Aircraft (AMCA) by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

The fighters – expected to take to the skies by 2026 as per current projects – are being planned to substitute costly imports of combat aircraft in the future, with the air force keen that a home grown engine be developed for true self dependence.

Sources said that while the first two squadrons of the AMCA will be powered by a variant of American origin GE 414 engine, the project will be clearing in the coming months on the condition that a parallel process be initiated by DRDO to develop a aero engine plant with foreign collaboration. “A clear path towards developing our own aero engine is essential and should be done along the AMCA programme which is being supported. If needed, foreign collaboration from western nations that have advanced technologies can be sought,” senior officials told ET.



The assessment within the Indian establishment is that engine technologies needed for future aircraft are available with nations like France, UK and the US while traditional ally Russia has lagged behind in the field. The Indian side is also keen not to repeat a deficiency in the Chinese weapons development programme where the lack of a reliable aero engine programme is seen as an impediment.

As reported by ET, the DRDO has carried out preliminary designs for the AMCA and is confident that it will be in a position to roll out the first test fighter within five years of the project receiving the next stage of financial sanction that is pegged around \$ 1 billion. The air force has put its weight behind the project as well, along with the Light Combat Aircraft. In comments preceding the air force day, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria had said that “on the fifth generation (requirement), the AMCA has been given a go ahead and we have given it our whole support and are putting in our energies there” and that no imports were planned in the foreseeable future.

Plans to develop the indigenous Kaveri fighter jet engine as part of the Rafale offsets deal have not taken off, even though presentations have been made by the French side on creating an aircraft engine ecosystem in India. Similarly, a plan to share jet engine technology under the US-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) has been suspended last year after little progress was made by the two sides after detailed discussions.

<https://www.defenceaviationpost.com/2020/04/indias-next-gen-amca-fighter-jet-should-have-local-engines-iaf-to-drdo/>