

PRESS RELEASE

IIT Alumni Council to join hands with Mumbai University for MegaLab initiative.

New Delhi, May 29, 2020: IIT Alumni Council announced that it will partner Mumbai University in the MegaLab Mumbai initiative that will have a capacity of 10 million tests per month.

MegaLab Mumbai would be one of the largest test facilities in the world for Covid19 & other infectious diseases. A global competition is being launched to identify appropriate equipment sources, consumable manufacturers and operating partners. In order to enable the creation of an entire ecosystem to support the path breaking initiative, Mega Lab Mumbai had proposed to partner with research oriented institutions of national importance in Mumbai and the National Capital Region.

"IIT Alumni Council is honoured to have Mumbai University as it's partner for enabling world class healthcare infrastructure in Mumbai for testing & treatment of infectious diseases including Covid19. The students, faculty and research infrastructure of Mumbai University will act as the research backbone of the MegaLab project . MegaLab will be based on the end-to-end Kodoy indigenous technology stack and will have adequate capacity for testing the entire population of Mumbai for infectious diseases, each month " said Ravi Sharma, President of IIT Alumni Council. "This would be the first time when the IIT Alumni community would be working directly with one of the oldest and most prestigious Universities of India – as well as their highly placed and diverse alumni groups. This partnership will ensure the consistency, speed, quality and scale of MegaLab testing," he added .

On this first of it's kind partnership, Prof. Suhas Pednekar; Vice Chancellor, University of Mumbai said, "With a 160+ years history of excellence in academics, University of Mumbai has been a pioneer in research work across multiple disciplines. Building on its strength in biotechnology and related research areas such as biosciences, it is now chartering a new path by partnering in a path breaking initiative promoted by the IIT Alumni Council to create one of the largest labs ever built for molecular diagnostic and genetic testing in Mumbai with a capacity of 10 Million RTPCR tests per month"

IIT Alumni Council has been on the forefront of catalyzing and motivating students, professionals, corporates, startups and academicians to align their energies in the quest to find innovative, low-cost and rapidly scalable solutions for C19. The Council, along with partner organizations and Dr Muffazal Lakadawala's team, helped set up digital x-ray systems that successfully used AI to detect C19 for the first time. Subsequently, within one week of the first contactless c19 isolation center going live at NSCI, Mumbai, the team took the initiative of launching India's first C19 Test Bus in Mumbai on Maharashtra Day. The x-ray has thereafter been superseded in design with ultracompact indigenous ultrasound scanners so that the entire functionality of a covid bus can now be fitted in a cab.

Inorder to solve the challenge posed by shortage of kits, pool testing algorithms were selected via an open competition by a highly accomplished jury and submitted to the Government of India for its consideration. On the 1st of May 2020, alumni groups associated with the Council started work on indigenization of the test kits.

Several IIT alumni teams associated with the IIT Alumni Council have already developed 100% indigenous kits which are in various stages of manufacturing and approvals. They expect to operationalize enough manufacturing capacity in India so as to meet the entire requirement of developing countries including India, China, Asean, Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

MegaLab Mumbai is the biggest C19 initiative of the IIT Alumni Council. This initiative aims to help design and establish the largest genetic testing laboratory for C19 and other infectious diseases (for example, Tuberculosis) with an end-to-end capacity to carry out over 10 million tests per month. Keeping in mind the opportunity to replicate with smaller capacities at other places in India & in other developing countries, the MegaLab would comprise of three independent lines – 1 million tests per month (tpm), 3 million tpm and 6 million tpm.

In this mammoth undertaking, MegaLab Mumbai is expected to work with National Centre for Nanosciences & Nanotechnology and the Innovation & Incubation center of Mumbai University. The Alumni of IITs and alumni companies would work with students, faculty and alumni of Mumbai University in this mission.

On this occasion, Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni, Pro-Vice Chancellor Mumbai University said : “University of Mumbai has an outstanding track record in the area of biological and medical sciences. Several doctors who are at the forefront in the fight against Corona Virus have been our Alumni and we take pride in their contribution. By partnering in the Mega Lab initiative with the IIT Alumni council, we intend to provide our research students and teaching staff an opportunity to gain exposure to and to contribute to the latest technologies and innovations in the field of molecular diagnostics and genetic testing.”

“The Megalab initiative of IIT Alumni Council would strongly support, the highly specialized laboratory being set up the Nano-science Center of University of Mumbai as part of the Engineered Biomolecule Manufacturing Initiative. This facility would conduct research on covid19 as well as other infectious diseases. The learnings from MegaLab as well as the data generated would not only be very helpful in developing prophylactic and therapeutic solutions for covid19 but also for other pressing issues such as tuberculosis” said Dr Samir Kulkarni, Director of Innovation, who manages the 40,000 sq ft. Mumbai University Incubation Center "MU-IDEAS" and who also holds additional charge as the Director of the National Center for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology of the Mumbai University.

About Mumbai University

The University of Mumbai, informally known as Mumbai University (MU) is a collegiate public state university located in Mumbai, Maharashtra. It offers bachelors, masters, and doctoral courses, as well as diplomas and certificates in many disciplines such as fine and applied arts, commerce and management, science, architecture, biotech, pharmacy, and engineering. The language of instruction for most courses is English. Mr. Ratan Tata is the appointed head of Mumbai University's advisory council.

The University of Mumbai was established in 1857. It was modelled on the universities in the United Kingdom, specifically the University of London. The university has two campuses across Mumbai (Kalina Campus and Fort Campus) and three outside Mumbai. The Fort campus, which is a UNESCO designated world heritage site, carries out administrative work while the Kalina campus boasts of several academic and research centres, including the National Centre for Nano-sciences and Nanotechnology. The university also managed the departments of Medicine and Medical Research located in several prominent hospitals in Mumbai until 1998 when the government decided to consolidate all the Medical colleges of the state into a separate university.

Presently, the university has over 800 affiliated colleges and autonomous institutes/colleges; with more than eight lakh students enrolled in more than 550 different academic programs. The university has established collaborative research programs with several national/international universities/institutes.

About IIT Alumni Council

IIT Alumni Council is the largest global body of alumni, students and faculty across all the twenty-three IITs with 100+ city chapters globally. The C19 Task Force was set up in February 2020 by the Global Board of the IIT Alumni Council. The objective of the Task Force is to rally the technological and venture capital prowess of alumni of all the IITs to launch a frontal attack on the Sars Cov2 virus that leads to the Covid19 disease.

The IIT Alumni Council aspires to catalyze India's technological renaissance. It's initiatives are financially supported by philanthropic foundations and Tier 1 social funds including PanIIT fund . Through it's initiatives , IIT Alumni Council intends to act as a network and a bridge between various providers of knowledge, wealth, information, wisdom, ideas, expertise and entrepreneurship to promote technological solutions to problems facing India. The PanIIT Fund, which commenced operations in April 2020 is India's largest SEBI regulated domestic social philanthropic fund that brings together IIT Alumni, IIT faculty/students and industry to arrive at technological solutions for urgent social challenges.

With involvement of over 20,000 technologist participants and over one hundred city chapters, the C19 Task Force set up by the IIT Alumni Council aspires to lead the fight against C19 by supplementing and complimenting the efforts of the central and state governments. The Council has rallied the considerable resources of the global IIT alumni to catalyze technological and financial interventions in Mumbai city. For more information on IIT Alumni Council, please visit www.iitalumnicouncil.org