

Nagaland gets upgraded Food Lab



Himato inspecting the laboratory on Tuesday. (DIPR)

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Nagaland got its first state-of-the-art Food laboratory at State Public Health Laboratory in Kohima on Tuesday.

The lab, which is the first in the entire North East, was inaugurated by principal secretary cum commissioner Food Safety of department of Health and Family Welfare, I. Himato Zhimomi.

The level-2 lab has three fully functional equipments– Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometer (LCMS), Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometer (GCMS) and Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometer (ICPMS) – being added to it here on Tuesday. Worth Rs 10 crore, the equipments were fully funded by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

These equipments can analyse wide range of food components – organic, inorganic parts of food contents like vitamins, proteins, peptides, amino acid hormones, food colours, metals, etc.

ICPMS can distinguish food flavouring enhancers from natural origin or synthetic chemicals, natural or artificial sweeteners, emulsifiers or stabilisers, etc, and can also identify natural or added synthetic food colours and quantify them.

These equipments can also be used in identification and determination of molecular mass of heavy metal compounds that may get into food or water bodies from the environment and can test water quality or potential food contamination from its source of origin like environmental factor.

The equipments are powerful tools for characterisation of various biomolecules, including proteins, nuclei and carbohydrates, can analyse the nutritional composition or contents of food samples and detect or identify pesticides in food bodies and quantitate the impurities.

While GCMS analyses volatile compounds, LCMS is useful for polar compound samples and ICPMS is used for detecting molecular mass on elemental composition of metal compounds.

Speaking at a function organised on the occasion, food safety and health & family welfare principal secretary & commissioner I Himato Zhimomi said with new equipments added to the State Food Laboratory, food business operators can come and test food before selling to public by paying the prescribed fee.

He said there was acute shortage of food safety officers in the State – against a requirement of 70, there were currently only seven such officials, thereby making their task very difficult. He, however, assured that the government will listen to their grievances and urged them to work with determination.

Asserting that the equipments were latest and of highest latest quality, he urged the officials to perform their duties with all sincerity.

In his brief address, Health & Family Welfare principal director Dr Vikeyie Losu said it was a moment to celebrate for the department as the laboratory was upgraded to Level-2. The SPHL has progressed step by step and has reached this far, he added.

Though the equipments were there for some time, Losu said after the principal secretary took over and the sincerity of officials concerned, the laboratory received the required momentum.

He urged the officials to perform their duties with determination and sincerity The programme was chaired by food analyst of State Public Health Laboratory Khrukutolu Veswuh.

Department officials, officials from KMC, NVCO and others attended the programme.