

Towards India's genome dream

M SAI GOPAL

Hyderabad

Imagine a repository of over 30,000 Indian genomes covering a wide variety of groups from various regions and ethnic backgrounds accessible to researchers and healthcare providers.

Such a large Indian genomic data will not only enable researchers in finding patterns of how genes are expressed but also help in spotting mutations, which could be the answer for personalised therapy protocols for cancer patients, cardio-vascular ailments, end-stage kidney ailments and many more.

An Indian company along with several others in Asia took up this ambitious project to collect the genomic code of a whopping one lakh Asians, which also includes over 30,000 Indians from various parts of the country.

In the past, there were isolated attempts at finding genomic sequence of one or two Indian groups but this is for the first time that a concerted effort was taken up to col-

lect the genome sequence of such a large set of population.

Standard genome

"Indian researchers need to have access to standard Indian genomic data to isolate the genes responsible for causing ailments among Indians. Almost all the medical standards, for instance ideal BP levels, sugar levels or anything else is based on Caucasian population. In the coming years, we intend to sequence genome of Indians and reach towards a standardised Indian genome," says CEO (India), MedGenome, Girish Mehta.

Talking to *Telangana Today*, Mehta said MedGenome, a Bengaluru-based company, committed US\$10 million for the project. The overall cost of the one lakh Asian genome is close to Rs 100 crore or over USD 120 million.

"We are collaborating with Singapore and South East Asian biotech companies to take part in preparing this genomic sequence," Mehta said.

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“This will be very important because we will not only get to know the standard Indian genome but also the Asian genomic sequence, which is vital to form new treatment protocols,” he said during a visit to Hyderabad.

“Unfortunately, we are second largest population but we still do not have standard genome code. Earlier, genome sequencing of a single human



*MedGenome CEO (India)
Girish Mehta.*

being was very expensive but technology is rapidly making it very affordable.