

Andaman & Nicobar Vigyan Evam Swasthya Anusandhan Newsletter

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ICMR-Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC), Sri Vijaya Puram, is one of the 27 permanent institutes of the Indian Council of medical Research, Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. Established on April 1, 1983, ICMR-RMRC conducts biomedical research on communicable and non-communicable diseases prevalent in the A&N Island, with a special focus on the indigenous tribes and the health research capacity building. In 2004, ICMR-RMRC was designated as the WHO Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) for diagnosis, research, reference, and training in leptospirosis.

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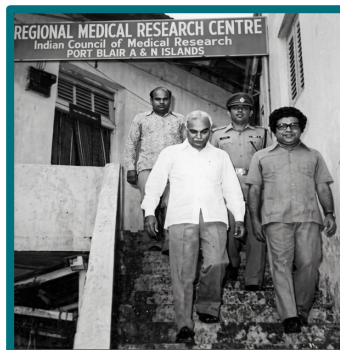
Message from the Director



Dr. Aparup Das

It is my profound pleasure to present the inaugural issue of "ANVESAN", the quarterly newsletter of ICMR-Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC), Sri Vijaya Puram, Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This initiative aims to disseminate our research activities and enhance public health awareness among communities, students, practitioners, and policymakers. In this issue we highlight on research activities on leptospirosis, as it continues to be a significant public health challenge in the islands, influenced by unique ecological and climatic conditions. Simultaneously, our recent initiative on research hemoglobinopathies, particularly sickle cell disease, emphasizes early detection, improved screening, and increased community awareness. Through rigorous research, collaborative public health efforts, and active community engagement, our Centre remains committed to translating scientific knowledge into effective action, ultimately improving health outcomes and the well-being of the Island communities.

Moments from History



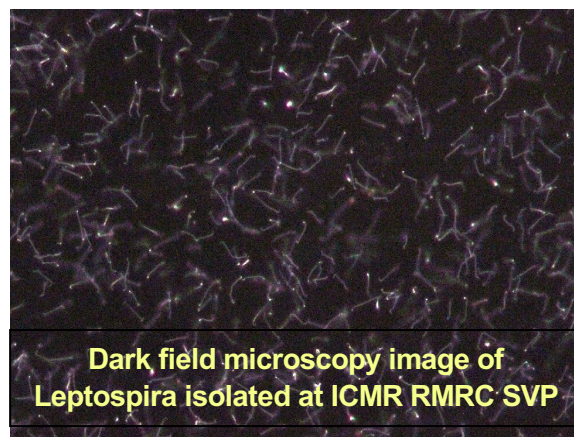
In 1984, the Member of Parliament for the Andaman & Nicobar Islands highlighted the serological investigations conducted at ICMR-RMRC, emphasizing the use of Microscopic Agglutination Tests (MAT) and ELISA assays for effective surveillance, accurate diagnosis, and outbreak monitoring of leptospirosis among vulnerable island populations.

In 2019, ICMR-RMRC Sri Vijaya Puram hosted the *World Congress on Leptospirosis: Climate Change and the Changing Epidemiology*. The event brought together 68 delegates from 11 countries and culminated in the adoption of the *Port Blair Declaration*, emphasizing strengthened global collaboration in leptospirosis research and control.

“Andaman Fever” - The Story of Leptospirosis in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Leptospirosis, a bacterial disease has been recognized in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands since 1903, where it came to be known as “Andaman fever.” In its early years, the disease, particularly when presenting with jaundice, was often misdiagnosed as a complication of severe malaria, which was then widespread in the region. It was later correctly identified as leptospirosis, especially in its severe form as “Weil’s disease”. In the year 1929 a detailed investigation of Weil’s disease was conducted by J. Taylor and Amar Nath Goyal from the Pasteur Institute of Burma. They established a laboratory at Ross General Hospital in Port Blair (now Sri Vijaya Puram), documenting cases among penal settlement populations and British troops exposed to wet soil, with referrals from nearby dispensaries. In 1988, an outbreak of a severe febrile illness with pulmonary hemorrhage was initially termed “*Andaman Hemorrhagic Fever*.” However, in 1995, scientists of our centre confirmed it as leptospirosis: marking a key public health milestone. By 1999, our centre demonstrated that weekly doxycycline prophylaxis (200 mg) could significantly reduce illness and mortality.

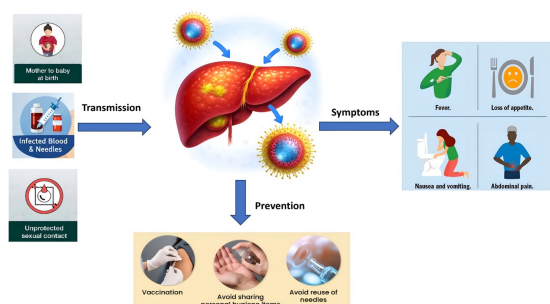
Today, leptospirosis remains a major public health concern in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as well as in several states of the mainland India with high mortality rates. Although major burden of this infectious disease remains high particularly during monsoon months, transmission occurs year-round. Marked as a zoonotic disease that transmits through livestock populations and small animals living in the vicinity of human habitations, early diagnosis and prompt treatment are the keys to defeat mortality due to leptospirosis and further transmission in the community. Over and above, preventive measures, such as hygiene, protective footwear, and rapid medical consultation are essential to reducing disease severity and saving lives.



Dr. K. S. Mohammed Sameer Ali
Scientist ‘B’

SCHOLAR'S CORNER

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV), which remains as a global health burden affecting millions of people all over the globe. The virus can spread through contact with infected body fluids like blood, saliva, vaginal fluids and semen or be passed from a mother to her baby. The infection can be acute or chronic and chronic infections is linked to cirrhosis and liver cancer. Many infected individuals remain asymptomatic in the early stages, making early detection crucial. Common symptoms, when present, include fatigue, jaundice, abdominal pain, and dark urine. However, the good news is that Hepatitis B is preventable through effective vaccination, practicing safe sexual contact, using sterile medical equipment, and ensuring safe blood transfusion. Social awareness also plays a vital role in preventing Hepatitis B.



In regions of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Hepatitis B remains a public health concern, especially in tribal populations, emphasizing the need for continued screening, vaccination, treatment and spreading community awareness, thereby aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 3 to eliminate viral Hepatitis by the year 2030.

Ms. Saloni Basu
Ph. D. student

Brainstorming meeting on Sickle Cell Disease (Jan 28-30, 2026)



ICMR–RMRC Sri Vijaya Puram organized a two-day Brainstorming and proposal finalization meeting on “*Genomic Variations and Sickle Cell Disease*” from 28–29 January 2026. The event brought together national-level clinical experts in Sickle Cell Disease (SCD), along with specialists in genomics and public health. Key public health officials from the Andaman and Nicobar Island administration also participated. The sessions addressed genomic variations, clinical management, public health strategies, and research priorities related to SCD. The discussions helped lay the foundation for a pan-India multicentric research project aimed at understanding the genomic basis of SCD. This initiative aligns with the Prime Minister’s vision to eliminate Sickle Cell Disease in India by 2047.

Hands on training workshop on Leptospirosis (March 9-13, 2026)



ICMR–RMRC Sri Vijaya Puram conducted a five-day National Level Hands-on Training Workshop on “*Diagnosis of Leptospirosis*” from 9–13 March 2026, with 25 participants from across India. Organized in collaboration with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Delhi, the workshop aimed to strengthen laboratory capacity and surveillance of Leptospirosis – a major zoonotic disease India. The sessions introduced advanced molecular diagnostic techniques and preventive strategies, blending theory with practical exposure.





As part of the TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, ICMR–RMRC Sri Vijaya Puram, in collaboration with local health authorities, organized a health camp at Fisheries Colony, Dairy Farm on 20 January 2026. A total of 65 residents were screened for tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes, and nutritional status, aiming to promote early detection and enhance community well-being.



A Health Camp–cum–Screening Programme was conducted on 09 March 2026 at Shadipur under the National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission. The initiative, jointly organized by DHS Sri Vijaya Puram and ICMR–RMRC SVP, screened 25 participants for sickle cell anemia and tuberculosis, promoting early detection and strengthening community health services.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Cool Tips for Hot Days

- Sip Smart; Eat Light; Dress Cool; Skip the Sun; Keep Clean

Immunity insights

- Vaccinate Early; Protect All; Stay Strong

Clean air corner

- Plant Trees; Limit Smoke; Breathe Easy

“Stay Cool, Stay Protected, Go Green”

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

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- Kuppusamy P *et al.*, **Indian Journal of Clinical Biochemistry**. 2026 Jan 9:1-8. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12291-025-01381-6>
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