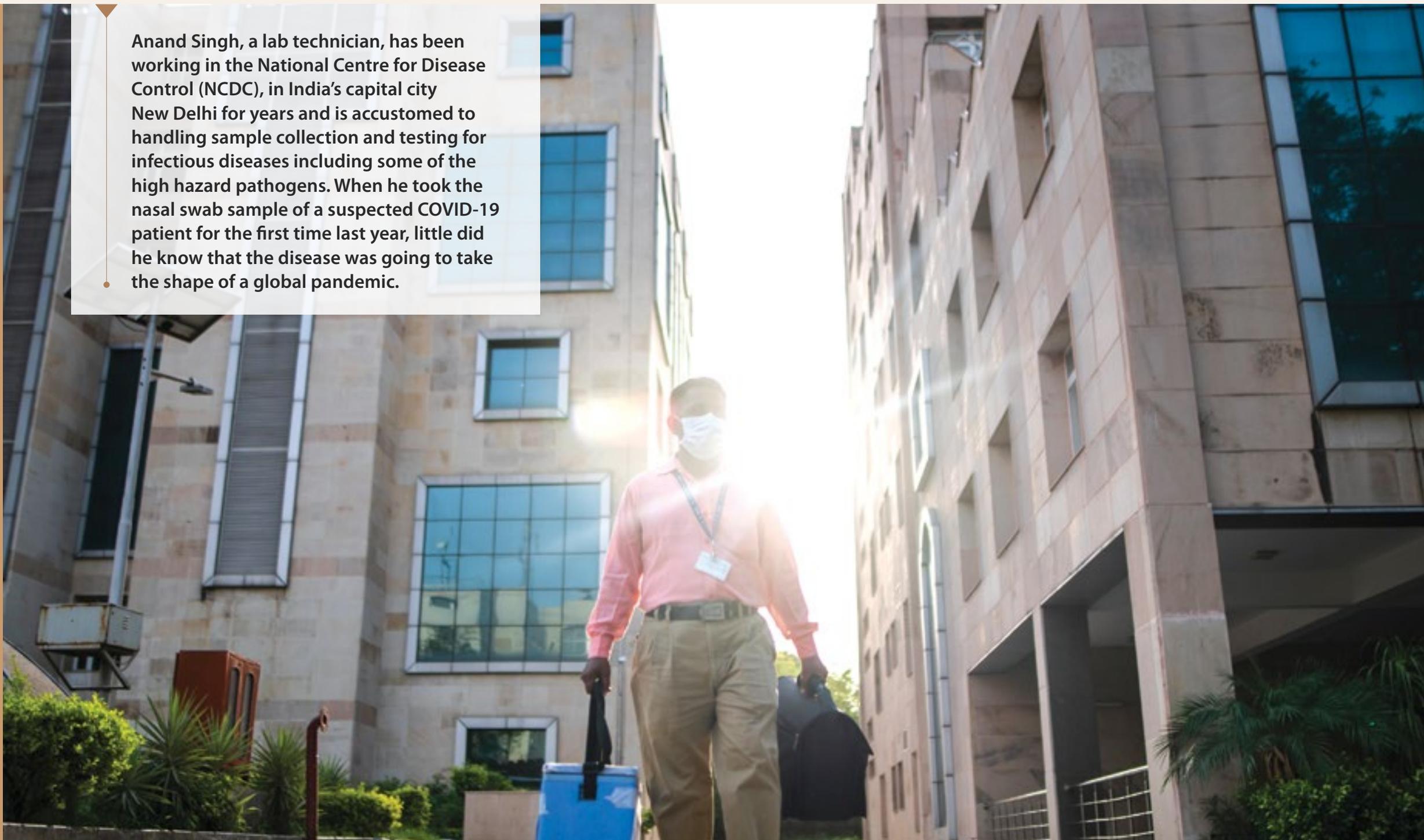


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As COVID-19 took on pandemic proportions, India had to quickly ramp-up the testing capacities. Early identification of cases, followed by isolation and treatment was integral to Government of India's "Test, Track, Treat" strategy to contain the virus from spreading rapidly. This exercise called for quick scaling up of the laboratories and training of lab personnel including technicians. As on date the country has already crossed the half billion mark of total samples tested.

The seventh story on COVID warriors pays tribute to lab technicians like Anand Singh who took on the virus, literally with their hands.

Anand Singh, a lab technician, has been working in the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), in India's capital city New Delhi for years and is accustomed to handling sample collection and testing for infectious diseases including some of the high hazard pathogens. When he took the nasal swab sample of a suspected COVID-19 patient for the first time last year, little did he know that the disease was going to take the shape of a global pandemic.





“My day begins in the wee hours of the morning and goes on till late in the night. Collecting samples day in and day out has been my story for over a year now. Even then at the peak of the pandemic, a certain despondency had set in because the queue of cases never seemed to cease”, says Anand.



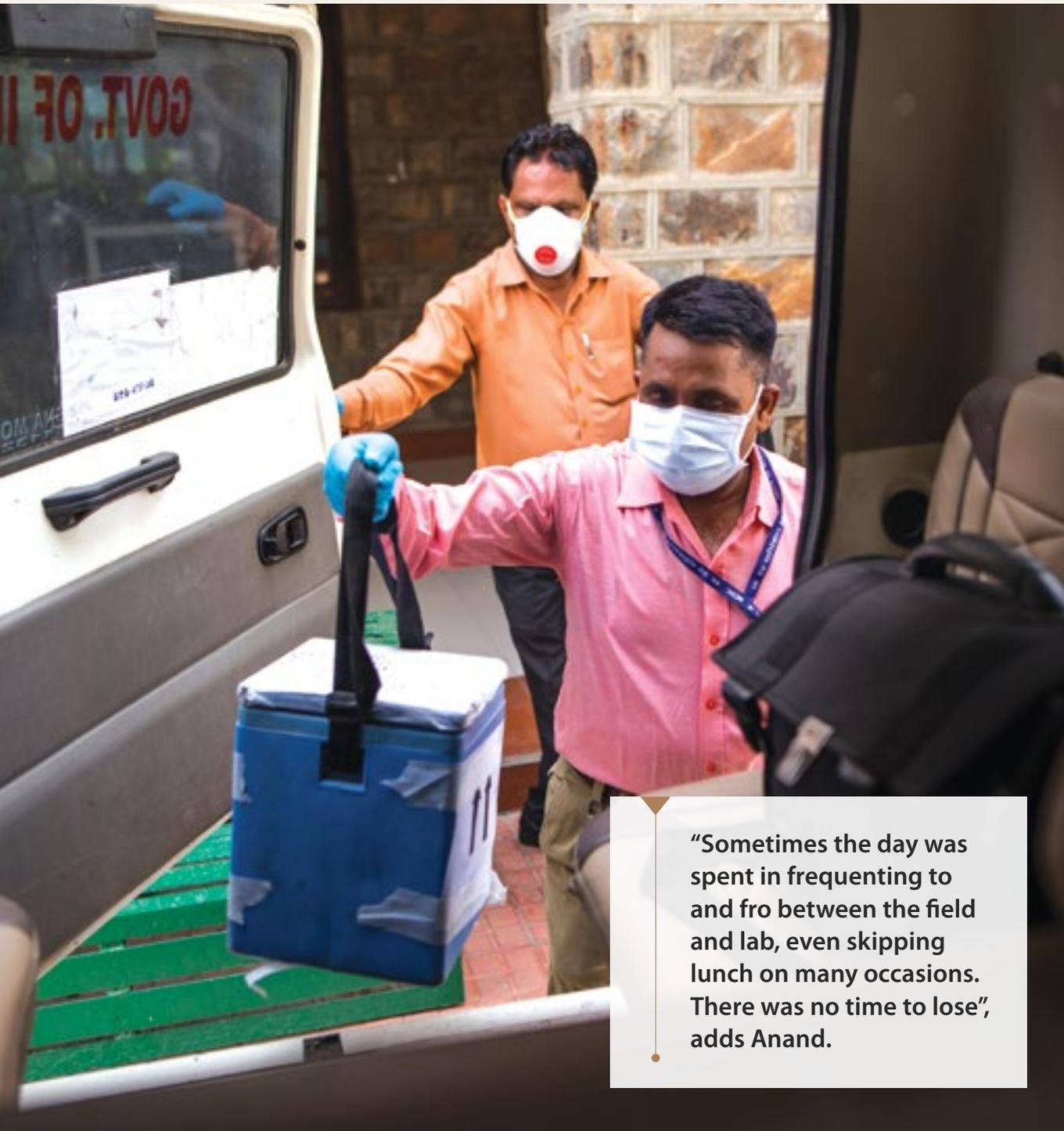
“This was a critical time for the entire country and in this hour of crisis, all health workers needed to work together and support the Government. This was the only way out”, says Anand when recalling the spirit that made him go on.



Anand and his colleagues went through intense training by the Government of India as the country braced for COVID-19. The invisible enemy had yet to show its disturbing face.



As the pandemic spread, its severity too intensified. Anand was shifted to the field, where his responsibility was to collect the samples of the suspected COVID-19 patients. It was also a test of his endurance.

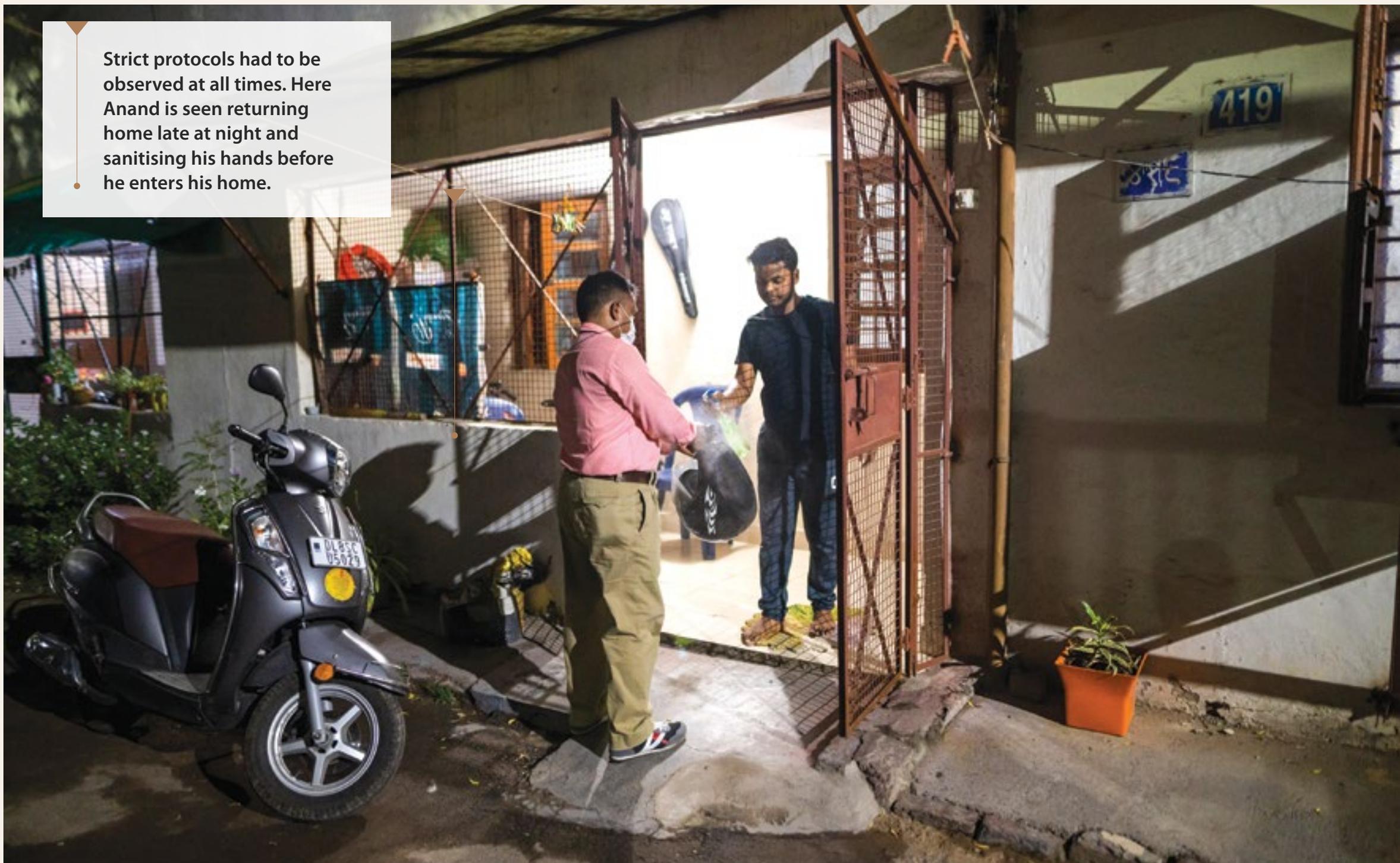


“Sometimes the day was spent in frequenting to and fro between the field and lab, even skipping lunch on many occasions. There was no time to lose”, adds Anand.

“Sample collection could at times become a challenge. While people were anxious about the diagnosis, they would many a time be nervous while taking the nasal or throat swab. At times some people would also get irritated and annoyed. It was nice to see them heave a sigh of relief when the job was done”, says Anand.



Strict protocols had to be observed at all times. Here Anand is seen returning home late at night and sanitising his hands before he enters his home.





Anand is caught on camera in his moment of respite. Is it a jest or the day's tally on the phone that brings a smile to his face!

Lab technicians like Anand who handled samples in thousands in the past year and a half, without worrying about the risk it carried for them and their families are real brave hearts!

