

Vaccine wastage has to be drastically reduced, states should optimally use vaccine: Union Health Secretary

70 districts in 16 states have shown around 150% rise in COVID-19 cases over the last 15 days: Union Health Secretary

In Maharashtra, 60% of all active cases and 45% of all new COVID-19 related deaths are concentrated, share of RT-PCR tests should increase: Union Health Secretary

Unlike the earlier phase, COVID cases are being reported in Tier II and III cities: Member (Health), NITI Aayog

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"The contribution of active cases as well as the case fatality rate is 2 percent or less than it. This is significant as some states are seeing a surge of COVID-19", stated Union Health and Family Welfare Secretary Shri Rajesh Bhushan at a media briefing on the actions taken, preparedness and updates on COVID-19, held at National Media Centre in New Delhi today. He also informed that the **cumulative positivity rate has become less than 5 percent in the entire country**. Although some states having a positivity rate of 8 percent or more, the cumulative positivity rate over the last week had been around 3 percent, he further added.

Starting from March, 2020, the average daily number of COVID-19 cases in the mid-September, 2020 had been around 97,800, after which the numbers started diminishing to become around 9,000 per day and then started spiking up again, which is a "reason for

worry", stated Shri Bhushan. After mid-September, the lowest number of COVID-19 cases was reported on February 9, 2021 when 9,110 cases were reported in the country. Since then, spike of cases were reported from some states. As a result, 14,264 new cases were reported in the country on February 21, 2021, followed by 17,407 cases on March 4, 2021 and 28,902 cases as on yesterday. This shows nearly a 43% increase in new COVID-19 cases and nearly 37% increase in new deaths on a week-on-week basis.

Union Health Secretary further stated, 70 districts in 16 states have shown around 150% rise in COVID-19 cases over the last 15 days. Further, there are 55 districts in 17 states where COVID-19 cases have risen by 100%-150% in the last 15 days. "Most of these districts are located in Western and Northern India", he added.

The Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry has advised these states to make the vaccination process more focussed and work with a targeted approach in these districts for cent percent coverage of the various prioritised groups. These states have also been advised **to focus on COVID Appropriate Behaviour and Clinical Management**. These states should have greater vigilance and monitoring at highest levels for all potential events where crowds gather and also clinical management in districts reporting higher deaths. Further, National Clinical Management Protocol has to be adhered to in districts reporting higher deaths, stated Shri Bhushan. Further, a renewed focus is on "Test, Track, Treat, Vaccinate", said the Shri Bhushan. This includes significant **increase in testing in all districts, with a minimum of 70% RT PCR tests**.

Speaking about the progress in vaccination, Shri Bhushan informed **that 3.51 crore citizens have been vaccinated till date**, out of which 1.38 crore first doses have been given to those aged 60 years and above and those aged above 45 years having co-morbidities. A total of more than 50 thousand public and private hospitals are working as COVID Vaccination Centres across the country. In the context of vaccine administration globally, Shri Bhushan also informed that on 15th March, 8.34 million doses were administered world-wide, of which India alone has administered 36% of doses. "The speediest acceleration of COVID vaccine doses in any country has been seen in India", stated the Union Health Secretary. **An analysis of average doses administered per day shows that Rajasthan is leading in this count, followed by Maharashtra and then Gujarat**. Stating this data, the Union Health Secretary appealed to all states to accelerate the vaccination process and coverage.

The Union Health Secretary also informed that **6.5% of vaccine wastage has been reported** in India. Telengana, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Jammu & Kashmir have reported a wastage of vaccines which is more than that of the national average. Stating this, Shri Bhushan stated that a message has been shared with states which urge them not to optimally use vaccine which is a public health commodity. "Vaccine wastage has to be drastically reduced. Any reduction in wastage means inoculating more people", he appealed.

Member (Health), NITI Agog, Dr. V K Paul said, **epidemiological approach of containment and surveillance strategy should be strictly followed** and this will be the first step towards containing the surge. He also stated that unlike the earlier phase, cases are being reported in Tier II and III cities

In Maharashtra, 60% of all active cases and 45% of all new COVID-19 related deaths are concentrated. The positivity rate of Maharashtra has gone up from 10.9% on 1st March to 16.4% on 15th March which is a "cause for worry", said Shri Bhushan. However, "the testing numbers has not increased in the state at a speed commensurate with the increase in positivity rate", stated the Union Health Secretary. "We have advised to the states,

especially Maharashtra, where two central teams were also sent recently, to increase the number of tests and also to increase the share of RT-PCR tests", stated Shri Bhushan. The proportion of RT-PCR tests in Maharashtra is 71% which should be increased or at least maintained at this level, added Shri Bhushan. **The districts of Nanded, Nandurbar, Beed, Dhule, Nashik, Jalgaon, Bhandara, Nagpur, Chandrapur, Ahmednagar, Buldhana, Aurangabad and Akola have raised concern.**

In a reply to a media query, the Health Secretary mentioned that, "There is no shortage of vaccines in the country; a daily report is being prepared on the basis of number of doses provided to every State/UT, doses consumed and the balance available with each state. The daily sheet is made based on the data provided by the states to the Centre."

The Union Health Secretary, while answering another query said that, "India has provided around 7.54 Crore doses to its States/UTs". He stated that claims about vaccines not being made available to citizens, while the same is supplied to other countries are baseless.

Union Health Secretary's presentation may be accessed [here](#)

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