

**People aged 45 years and above are the most vulnerable; Case Fatality Rate of this group is 2.85%
: Health Secretary**

771 variants found in the country through genome sequencing; includes UK Strain, South Africa Variant and Brazil variant

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Nine out of 10 top districts with maximum active COVID cases are in Maharashtra. Districts include Pune, Nagpur, Mumbai, Thane, Nashik, Aurangabad, Nanded, Jalgaon and Akola. Of the total cases reported across the country, only 3.14% of the cases account for active cases. Union Health and Family Welfare Secretary Shri Rajesh Bhushan presented the details at a media briefing on the actions taken, preparedness and updates on COVID-19, held at National Media Centre in New Delhi today.

Shri Bhushan also shared state-wise details of COVID cases in the country and raised concern over the recent surge being witnessed in a few states including Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh among others. Speaking about the Vaccination drive which is being carried out in the he said that, "More than five crore doses have been administered of which two crore doses have been given to people above 60 years."

The Secretary also cited the recommendations made by National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization and National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC). "It has been recommended to provide second dose of Covishield at 4-8 weeks' interval after first dose instead of the earlier practice of 4-6 weeks," he mentioned. "The revised duration is applicable only for Covishield and not Covaxin," he added.

Speaking about the recent development in the vaccination drive to vaccinate every citizen above 45 years of age from 1st of April, he explained that, "This decision has been taken since 88% of all COVID deaths in the country are taking place in age group of 45 and above; Case Fatality Rate of this group is 2.85% and it has been observed that people of 45 years and above are the most vulnerable."

Shri Bhushan also appreciated certain States/UTs like Kerala, Odisha, Lakshadweep, Rajasthan etc which have administered first dose of vaccination to 100% of its Health Care Workers. "20 States/UTs have administered first dose to more than 92% of Health Care Workers. However vaccination of HCW is still found to be low in certain regions like Telangana, Chandigarh, Nagaland, Punjab," he stated.

He also pointed out that the whole process of Vaccination has been made liberal by opening up it for private hospitals too. "Not just hospitals but also there are provision of flexi timings-- where vaccination can be carried out till late night. Of the total doses administered in Maharashtra, over 29% of the doses have been administered through private facilities," he mentioned.

Director, National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) briefed about the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) which was set up in December 2020 to monitor the genomic

variations in the SARS-CoV-2. He also shared state wise details of three strains viz. UK Strain, South Africa Variant and Brazil variant found in India. "A total of 771 variants have been found from more than 10,000 samples being subject to genome sequencing. The variants have been found in 18 States/UTs including 62 variants in Maharashtra. A total of 736 UK Strains , 34 South Africa Strain and 1 Brazil variant have been traced so far in the country," he said.

The Director also stressed that so far there is no established linkage between the recent surges in cases and mutation. "There are many reasons for the surge - wherever the pool of susceptible population is bigger and when they lower the guard by not following COVID appropriate behaviours they are prone to infection. It may also be noticed that the current SARS-COV-2 variants detected in the community have been prevalent since 6-8 months," he added.

"Suppress the chains of transmission. The more we suppress the less it will replicate in the country. If we protect ourselves from getting infected then there will be no mutations too. This is the ultimate way to bring the infections to zero," appealed Member (Health), NITI Agog, Dr. V K Paul. He also insisted that the country's 75% of the total population is susceptible population and it is a bigger risk factor and hence everyone should strictly follow COVID appropriate behavior.

[PPT Presented by Health Secretary is available here](#)

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