

**Russia's Sputnik V has been approved for emergency use in India, Govt. authorises foreign-produced COVID vaccines with emergency approval of WHO-listed agencies**

**States/UTs, can make use of Mobile Testing Labs to ramp up RT-PCR tests: Health Secretary**

**Remdesivir should be supplied only to hospitals; not advisable for mild cases, not to be supplied to patients or chemists : NITI Aayog**

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The previous highest surge of COVID cases has already been crossed and the trend is going upwards which is a cause for worry. The daily new cases has shot up from 94,372 during Sep 2020 to 1,61,736 in April 2021. In order to control the prevailing condition, there are 53 central teams which are camping in 53 districts showing surge in cases. Union Health Secretary stated this during a media briefing on the actions taken, preparedness and updates on COVID-19, held at National Media Centre in New Delhi today.

Speaking about the Average Daily Cases, the Health Secretary expressed his concern over Maharashtra reaching 57,000 plus cases this week. However he mentioned that the sharp increase in trend is being witnessed in most of the states with 10 more states following the trend - Chattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and Kerala.

Shri Bhushan also expressed concern over the low number of RT-PCR tests being done across states. Speaking about ramping up the RT-PCR tests he mentioned that the States/UTs, can make use of the mobile testing labs which have been developed in the country. "RT-PCR machines are also available on Government's e market place 'GeM' so that procurement could be easier for the States," he added. The expected share of RT-PCR tests is 70% of total tests carried out by the state.

"Rate of change of cases and Rate of change of Tests Per Million have to keep pace with each other," he said highlighting the fact that will enable in tracing the positive cases at the earliest.

He strictly spoke about adopting Test, Track, Treat, Covid Appropriate Behaviours and Vaccination

in order to control the number of cases

It was mentioned that more than 10.85 crore doses have been administered so far. He also spoke about the Vaccine wastage being witnessed in certain states. "On one hand we have Kerala with Zero wastage in vaccination whereas on the other hand certain states report a wastage of 8-9%."

As a solution to control the wastage he suggested that the vaccines can be re-appropriated between the cold storages in different districts of a State/UT based on consumption of vaccines. "If a particular district reports low consumption of vaccine while another district shows high consumption then the vaccine can be reappropriated between them in order to avoid wastage, if they prefer," he said.

India has become the first nation in administering highest number of daily doses of 41,69,609, this. He attributed the reason for this achievement to the collaborative efforts of the Centre and States/UTs and also the Cold Storage Units, successful Inventory Management being adopted. "We fail to see the many number of people working behind in the Vaccination Drive to ensure vaccines reach citizens," he said.

Member (Health), NITI Aag, Dr. V K Paul spoke about the two major developments that have taken place in the COVID front.

1) A third vaccine, Russia's Sputnik V has been approved for emergency use in India from the Drugs Controller General of India (DGCI).

2) The government has accepted the Covid-19 National Task Force's recommendation to authorise foreign-produced Covid-19 vaccines which have been granted emergency approval by the US, UK, EU, Japan and WHO-listed agencies.

As a result of which, the pre conditions of Clinical Trials for a foreign vaccine existed before for Emergency Use Authorisation has been done away with. This will make the availability of vaccines become faster.

Speaking about the unprecedented surge of demand for Remdesivir injection, being seen in the country he pointed out that, "Remdesivir is only for hospitalised people and who are on oxygen support. There is no question of use of Remdesivir in home set up. The drug should be supplied only to hospitals; not to patients or chemists. There should be rational use of this drug" he reminded. He also mentioned that doctors or physicians should strictly follow this and should not prescribe the same for mild cases, which will be unethical to do so.

"The medicine is available in plenty but it should be used rationally," he added.

He also advised to adapt AYUSH's immunity boosters which were earlier used by citizens to control the spread and boost immunity. "Chyavanprash, Turmeric Milk, Khada and also also practising YOGA daily can help us fight the pandemic. Yoga can help patients with post covid issues like breathlessness," he said.

PPT presented by the Health Secretary can be accessed [here](#).

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