

Busting Myths of Vaccination

61.06 million doses of vaccines administered by States/ UTs in May 2021

16.22 million balance, unutilized doses available with States/ UTs on 31st, May 2021

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Government of India has been supporting the efforts of States and UTs for an effective Vaccination drive under the ‘Whole of Government’ approach since 16th January, this year. In order to streamline availability of the vaccine doses, the Central Government has been constantly in touch with the vaccine manufacturers and has opened up different procurement options for states/UTs since 1st May 2021.

There have been several unfounded media reports that have peddled misinformation among the masses regarding this exercise of national importance.

There have been media reports alleging the Union Government promising 120 million doses of vaccines during June 2021 while administering only around 58 million doses from the total of 79 million doses available in the month of May. This report is factually incorrect and without any basis.

As per the data at 7:00 am, on 1st June 2021, between 1st-31st May 2021, a total of 61.06 million doses of vaccines have been administered by States/ UTs. A total of 16.22 million balance and unutilized doses were available with States/ UTs. The total vaccines shots available from 1st May – 31st May 2021 were 79.45 million.

Some media reports have criticized India’s vaccination policy based on unverified quotes. These reports questioning the prioritization of population segments are not supported by full information on the matter.

The National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC) was formed in August 2020 to provide guidance on all aspects of vaccine introduction including prioritization of beneficiaries, procurement, vaccine selection and its delivery. The priority of beneficiaries for COVID-19 vaccination in India has been done based on the review of available scientific evidence, guidelines proposed by WHO, global examples and practices followed in other countries. In India the primary objectives of COVID Vaccination are:

- Protect the healthcare as part of the pandemic response system.
- Prevent deaths due to COVID-19 and protect individuals at highest risk and vulnerability of mortality due to disease.

Accordingly, the vaccination drive in our country has been sequentially expanded to cover the prioritized groups starting with Health Care Workers (HCWs) followed by Front Line Workers (FLWs), then the persons aged 60 years and above and those aged 45-59 years with identified 20 co-morbidities. Subsequently, from 1st April 2021, all persons aged 45 years and above were eligible for COVID-19 vaccination.

Such an approach has yielded positive results by achieving more than 81% 1st dose coverage amongst registered HCWs and around 84% coverage of 1st dose amongst registered FLWs thereby protecting these cohorts who are involved in providing Health Care Services, Surveillance and Containment activities amidst the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic. 37% of 45 years and above age group have been administered first dose of vaccine whereas 32% of eligible beneficiaries of this group have been given the 2nd dose.

Now from 1st May, 2021 all citizens aged 18 years and above are eligible for vaccination. A 'Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy' was adopted on 1st May 2021 which is guiding the ongoing Phase-III of COVID-19 Vaccination Drive. Under the strategy, in every month 50% of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be procured by Govt. of India. It would continue to make these doses available to the States/UTs totally free of cost as was being done earlier. The remaining 50% doses are available for direct procurement by State/UT government and private hospitals, of which States share is on pro-rata basis.

MV/GS

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