

Expedite the development of COVID vaccine for children: Vice President urges scientific fraternity

Vaccination drive against COVID-19 should become pan-India 'Jan Andolan': Vice President

VP appeals to people to get vaccinated; says there is no room for vaccine hesitancy

VP urges media to educate masses on gains of vaccination

VP stresses the need to step up vaccine supplies and vaccinate all people

VP cautions people against becoming complacent by temporary decline in COVID-19 cases

VP advises leaders of various political parties and their followers to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour

Visits Bharat Biotech and lauds its scientists for developing an effective vaccine in a very short time frame

The Vice President, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu today urged the scientific fraternity to focus on expediting the development of COVID vaccine for children. He stressed that protecting children from the virus should be accorded priority.

Shri Naidu emphasized that the vaccination drive against COVID-19 should become a pan-India 'Jan Andolan' and appealed to the people to immunize themselves by taking the required doses of the vaccine.

Addressing scientists and staff of the Bharat Biotech International Limited after a visit to its plant at Genome Valley in Hyderabad, he said "there is no room for vaccine hesitancy". Urging everyone to get vaccinated, he said "there is no other more powerful way to protect ourselves and people around us".

Shri Naidu also commended the development of a nasal COVID vaccine as an important initiative. It can reduce vaccine hesitancy and improve the ease of administering, he said.

Asserting that advantages of vaccination far outweigh the perceived drawbacks, Shri Naidu said, this message should be driven home loud and clear to every nook and corner of the country. "It is now clear that vaccination is preventing hospitalization and severe disease when infected", he added.

The Vice President also advised the media to educate the masses on the gains of vaccination. He also urged the leaders from the medical fraternity to educate the people to adopt a healthy lifestyle, along with shedding vaccine hesitancy.

Cautioning people against becoming complacent by the temporary decline in COVID-19 cases, he said "let us be responsible citizens and not behave in a careless manner by violating Covid protocols". He appealed to the people to continue with masking, physical distancing and personal hygiene.

The Vice President also urged the leaders of various political parties and their followers to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour. "It is the duty of each one of us to act responsibly. We cannot afford to invite the third wave" he warned.

Observing that the constantly mutating virus poses unforeseen challenges and forces us to find solutions that will save lives and protect livelihoods, Shri Naidu said "we have to individually and collectively contribute to this national and international effort". He said that vaccine supplies must be stepped up rapidly and vaccines must be administered to all as quickly as possible.

He, however, expressed confidence that the immunization drive would pick up pace in the months ahead and said the Government of India intends to vaccinate all eligible adults by the year-end.

Lauding the scientists at Bharat Biotech for developing an effective vaccine in a very short time frame, he said "I compliment each one of you on this outstanding work. I appreciate the optimism and dynamism that Dr. Krishna Ella and Dr. Suchitra Ella have brought to this organization", he added.

Shri Naidu said that a few other Indian companies have also raced against time to produce COVID-19 vaccines, while some more are in the pipeline.

Pointing out that India has earned global appreciation as the 'pharmacy of the world', he said that India is supplying over 50 percent of vaccines and is the largest producer of generic drugs. Indian pharma firms are also supplying over 80 percent of the anti-retroviral drugs globally to combat AIDS.

Shri Naidu said that India's domestic pharmaceutical market, estimated at US\$ 42 billion in 2021, is likely to reach the US \$ 120-130 billion by 2030.

Expressing his happiness that Hyderabad has emerged as the hub for vaccines and bulk drugs, he said that he was pleased to note that it has also turned into a biotechnology hub with the Genome Valley driving the growth in this sector.

He said that it was heartening that one of the recently sanctioned Central Drug Laboratories has been located in Hyderabad. Appreciating the encouragement provided by the State government which proposed the project, he said "to which I had lent my ready support".

Stressing the need to quickly ramp up our ecosystem support and health infrastructure, he expressed happiness that the Government of India, the state governments and the private sector have prioritized this critical need and initiated collaborative action.

The Vice President, who went around the facilities of Bharat Biotech Limited, complimented the company for contributing significantly towards immunization programmes in India and around the world.

The Home Minister of Telangana, Shri Mohammed Mahmood Ali, the Chairman & Managing Director of Bharat Biotech International Limited, Dr. Krishna Ella, Joint Managing Director of Bharat Biotech, Mrs. Suchitra Ella, Whole-Time Director, Dr. V Krishna Mohan and the heads of various divisions of Bharat Biotech attended the event.

Following is the full text of speech –

“I am delighted to visit Bharat Biotech and acquire a first-hand understanding of the processes for the development of various life-saving vaccines.

I am happy to note that this company has state-of-art world-class facilities and is contributing significantly towards immunization programmes in India and many other countries.

I am happy to note that Bharat Biotech has delivered more than four billion doses of vaccines worldwide and has a product portfolio of more than 16 vaccines and four bio-therapeutics, including vaccines for Hepatitis-B, Influenza H1N1, Polio and Rotavirus.

I also recall that when I was Union Minister, this company’s Rotovac vaccine for prevention of rotavirus diarrhea was launched by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendrabhai Modi in March, 2015. I was also present on that occasion.

Subsequently in December 2019, I had launched ROTOVAC 5D at Upa-Rashtrapati Nivas.

Vaccines have been critical in the prevention and control of diseases for over a thousand years. However, the process of vaccine development has advanced considerably since Edward Jenner developed a vaccine to create immunity to smallpox in 1796. Now, we have vaccines for a number of diseases including diphtheria, tetanus, cholera, plague, typhoid and tuberculosis.

Technological development in the last hundred years has led to an unprecedented pace of vaccine research and development.

The pandemic sweeping across the entire globe over the last year and a half, has posed a huge challenge to the scientists.

It is truly amazing as to how scientists have built upon their vast research experience and developed several vaccines in less than a year.

I am glad that I am with one such illustrious team of brilliant scientists which has developed an effective vaccine in a very short time frame.

I compliment each one of you on this outstanding work.

I appreciate the optimism and dynamism that Dr. Krishna Ella and Dr. Suchitra Ella have brought to this organization.

India has been playing an important role in the pharmaceutical field globally.

Today, India is supplying over 50 percent of vaccines and is the largest producer of generic drugs.

Indian pharma firms are supplying over 80 percent of the anti-retroviral drugs globally to combat AIDS.

Quite appropriately, it has earned global appreciation as the ‘pharmacy of the world’.

In terms of pharmaceutical production volume, India ranks third in the world.

I am told that India's domestic pharmaceutical market is estimated at US\$ 42 billion in 2021 and likely to reach the US \$ 120-130 billion by 2030.

While India is known as the 'Pharmacy of the World', I am quite pleased that Hyderabad has emerged as the hub for vaccines and bulk drugs. I am told that Hyderabad accounts for 40 per cent of the bulk drugs manufactured in India and meets about 50 percent of the exports in bulk drugs.

I am pleased to note that Hyderabad has also turned into a biotechnology hub with the Genome Valley driving the growth in this sector.

Dear sisters and brothers,

I compliment Bharat Biotech for coming out with the indigenous Covaxin in a record time by collaborating with ICMR and National Institute of Virology. A few other Indian companies have also raced against time to produce COVID-19 vaccines, while some more are in the pipeline.

I am glad that the Government of India has not only stepped up vaccine development but has also expanded the laboratory network for expediting testing and pre-release certification of the vaccines.

It is heartening that one of the recently sanctioned Central Drug Laboratories has been located in Hyderabad, thanks to the encouragement provided by the State government which proposed this project and to which I had lent my ready support.

We, as a nation, should quickly ramp up our ecosystem support and health infrastructure.

I am glad that the Government of India, the state governments and the private sector have prioritized this critical need and collaborative action has been initiated.

The temporary decline in Covid cases in most parts of our country should not make us complacent.

We should take it as a breathing space, as an opportune moment for getting our act together, so that we can face any subsequent health challenges with greater confidence and commitment.

The urgent task is to vaccinate all people as quickly as possible.

I am told that over 45 crore vaccine doses have been administered across the nation till today in the world's largest vaccination drive.

I am sure, the immunization drive will pick up pace in the months ahead. The Government of India intends to vaccinate all eligible adults by the year-end.

I would like to once again emphasize that the vaccination drive should become a pan-India 'Jan Andolan' with increased participation from all sections of the people.

There is no room for vaccine hesitancy.

I appeal to everyone to come forward and get immunized by taking the required doses of the vaccine. There is no other more powerful way to protect ourselves and people around us.

Advantages of vaccination far outweigh the perceived drawbacks and this message should be driven home loud and clear to every nook and corner of the country. In fact, it is now clear that vaccination is preventing hospitalization and severe disease when infected.

The media also needs to highlight this aspect and educate the masses on the gains of vaccination.

At the same time, I would like to appeal to the people to continue with masking, physical distancing and personal hygiene.

Let us be responsible citizens and not behave in a careless manner by violating Covid protocols.

I also appeal to leaders of various political parties and their followers to follow Covid appropriate behaviour. It is the duty of each one of us to act responsibly. We cannot afford to invite the third wave.

Dear sisters and brothers,

You are front ranking scientists who are finding solutions to a very difficult and complex problem.

The nation is grateful to you for what you have already achieved.

I am pleased to note that you are also developing vaccines for children as well.

You have set new benchmarks and I am sure you will continue your tireless search for excellence.

The constantly mutating virus poses unforeseen challenges and forces us to find solutions that will save lives and protect livelihoods.

We have to individually and collectively contribute to this national and international effort.

We have to learn from the past experiences and move on with greater determination and courage.

Time to act is now.

Now is the time to take decisive steps together.

The vaccine supplies must be stepped up rapidly.

The vaccines must be administered to all as quickly as possible.

Once again, I am very happy to have visited Bharat Biotech and its facilities. My best wishes to all of you for your future endeavours as you augment the country's capacities to handle any health crisis.

With these collective efforts, I am confident that India will emerge stronger. I am confident that, together, we shall overcome.

Jai Hind!"

MS/RK/DP

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