

## Press Release

# Over 97% of vaccine recipients have appreciated the Indian COVID-19 vaccination drive so far: Dr. Vinod K. Paul, NITI Aayog

*Citing a survey conducted by the Ministry of Electronics & IT, Dr. Paul stated that India is showing 'high vaccine acceptance'. In a webinar hosted by Harvard School of Public Health - India Research Center & Project SANCHAR, Dr. Renu Swarup, Secretary, Dept. of Biotechnology, Govt added that 5 more vaccines are in clinical trial phase.*

**New Delhi. February 10, 2021:** Over 97% beneficiaries satisfied with COVID-19 vaccination experience in India, informed Dr. Vinod Kumar Paul, Member - NITI Aayog and Chairperson, COVID-19 Taskforce, Government of India. As part of the world's largest vaccination drive, India has vaccinated more than 6.6 million people including healthcare workers and frontline workers who were at high risk of the novel coronavirus.

A webinar on 'Building Public Confidence in Vaccination' was organized by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health - India Research Center and Project SANCHAR that brought together global and Indian experts to discuss the progress on COVID-19 vaccination in the Indian context.

### Hardly 1 in 1500 vaccine beneficiaries showing side-effects of COVID-19 vaccine

**Dr. Vinod Paul** further noted that the Indian experience of vaccination so far has been very positive and encouraging. He stated that "Vaccine hesitancy in India is now receding very fast. Both vaccines are the safest of vaccines. Only 1 out of 1500 people receiving the COVID-19 are getting mild post-vaccine effects."

Commenting on the basis of India's strategy of immunising a large population, he stated that India based its confidence on assured large amounts of indigenous vaccine supply, robust vaccine storage infrastructure and a one-stop IT solution in the form of **Co-Win**. He stated that Co-Win is the main enabler of tracking vaccine delivery, status of cold-chain and vaccine stocks, and additionally informs vaccine recipients on vaccine-related information.

### India's investment into the biomedical enterprise has paid off

**Dr. Renu Swarup**, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India, stated that India's investments in human resource, infrastructure and a conducive policy environment for vaccine acceptance has been key in the COVID-19 vaccine so far. Answering questions on the status of upcoming vaccines, she added that "**As echoed by the Prime Minister of India, more vaccines will be made available very soon to not only India but also to the world at large.**" India has 5-6 vaccines which are in advance phases of vaccine approval out of which two vaccines are in the Phase 3 trial. She stated that "The vaccines currently in development include a DNA vaccine with Cadila, mRNA vaccine by Genova, RBD based platform by Bio-E and India's partnership with Russia for Sputnik Trials, Intranasal vaccine by Bharat Biotech among others. Another robust pipeline of vaccines are in late stages of pre-clinical trials."

On the lines of the global Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI), India launched '**Indian Ind-CEPI**' which is a forum focused on developing competencies/technologies against diseases that can potentially be a threat to populations. This forum will build coordinated preparedness in the Indian public health system and vaccine industry to address existing and emerging infectious threats in India.

### **People must allay any fear of COVID-19 vaccines**

**Dr. N.K. Arora**, Chair, COVID-19 Sub-committee of National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization, Government of India, informed on a decision made by the Drug Controller General of India in 2019 to allow for emergency use of any drug or vaccine, if required. He stated "Three kinds of data are required for sanctioning vaccine deployment: safety, immunogenicity and efficacy. In case of 'emergency use' of any vaccine, as per globally accepted norms, data on only '**safety and immunogenicity**' are required and India's Covaxin and Covishield hence qualify for use. While the efficacy data for Covaxin is yet to be made available, the public must be rest assured as **antibody** production in Covaxin is excellent and the vaccine is very safe for use."

### **Trust, credibility, sense of fairness & transparency key to any immunization drive**

**Prof. K. Viswanath**, Lee Kum Kee Professor of Health Communication, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health recommended a '**Communication Surveillance System**' which preempts any vaccine related misinformation in India. Dr. Viswanath, who has also served as the Chair of the Working Group on Vaccine Confidence, National Vaccine Advisory Committee, United States's Department of Health and Human Services, added that "Vis-à-vis previous immunization drives, COVID-19 vaccination is happening in tremendous public scrutiny. Coordinated and consistent messaging is required. Governments at different levels, nonprofits and other public health authorities must communicate the same message."

The panellists agreed on the role played by social media platforms in deterring circulation of vaccine misinformation and encouraged the 'whole-of-nation' effort to battle vaccine related hesitancy. The webinar was moderated by Mr. Mukesh Kejariwal, Head - National Integrated Bureau, Rajasthan Patrika.

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**About the Co-Hosts:**

**Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health - India Research Center** is the first global Center of the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health. Established in 2015, the Center has three strategic goals of research, teaching, and translation of evidence into policies and programs. The Center provides a platform to facilitate faculty exchange and partnership between public health researchers and Harvard Chan faculty.

**Project SANCHAR or Science and News: Communicating Health And Research**, is aimed at building the capacity of journalists to draw on the latest science and data for shaping public knowledge, attitudes and policy on health. The project has thus far trained over 200 journalists across 9 states and union territories in India.

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