GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RESEARCH

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 407
TO BE ANSWERED ON 3RD FEBRUARY, 2023

SCIENTIFIC STUDY ON COVID VACCINE

407. SHRI NAMA NAGESWARA RAO:

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is planning to conduct a scientific study to find out the effectiveness of COVID vaccines and booster doses and their side effects, as recent studies in a USA report states that more than 50 percent of deaths are of people who were vaccinated or were given booster dose;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) the measures taken or proposed to be taken to strengthen the existing health system and institutions across the country to face any kind of pandemics along with outlay and timeline fixed in this regard?

ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(DR. BHARATI PRAVIN PAWAR)

(a) & (b): ICMR has conducted the following studies on the effectiveness and side effects of COVID-19 Vaccines: -

(i): A multi-centric, hospital-based, case-control study was conducted between May and July 2021. The Vaccine Effectiveness of complete vaccination was found to be 85% in Covishield and 71% in Covaxin. The Vaccine Effectiveness estimates were found to be similar against the Delta strain and sub-lineages.

(ii): The second study assessed the persistence of immunogenicity up to 6 months after a two or three-dose with COVAXIN. The results of the study indicated that a booster dose of COVAXIN is safe and necessary to ensure persistent immunity to minimize breakthrough infections of COVID-19, due to newly emerging variants.

(iii): A six-month analysis of the study titled "Immune response to precautionary third dose of COVISHIELD/COVAXIN among healthy adult population: an ICMR Cohort study, India" shows robust immune response with both vaccines.

(c): Ministry of Health & Family Welfare provides requisite support to States/UTs to enhance preparedness and response capacities. Funding support has been provided to States/UTs for health system strengthening to meet any exigency due to resurgence of cases in the country through National Health Mission, Emergency COVID-19 Response and Preparedness packages.

With the long-term goal to better prepare our country against public health emergencies, PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) with an outlay of Rs. 64,180 crores (for the period 2021-26) have been launched with the intent to enhance the capacity of primary, secondary and tertiary health care facilities/systems and institutes for identifying and managing any new and emerging diseases. These includes support for strengthening rural Health and Wellness Centres in High Focus States, establishment of urban Health and Wellness Centres in all the states, establishment of Block Public Health Units in High Focus states, setting up of Integrated Public Health Labs in all districts, establishing Critical Care Hospital Blocks in all districts with population more than 5 lakhs, developing central Institutions as training and mentoring sites with 150 bedded Critical Care Hospital Blocks, strengthening of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Regional NCDCs and metropolitan health surveillance units, expansion of the Integrated Health Information Portal to all States/UTs to connect all public health labs, operationalization of new Public Health Units and strengthening of 33 existing Public Health Units at Points of Entry, setting up of Health Emergency Operation Centres and container based mobile hospitals, setting up of a national institution for One Health, as well as New National Institutes for Virology, a Regional Research Platform for WHO South East Asia Region and Bio-Safety Level III laboratories.

Further, DBT through its Public Sector Undertaking, Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), has supported enhancement of capacities for conducting clinical trials, immunogenicity assays and animal challenge studies, which are important for vaccine development.

For early identification and diagnosis of emerging/re-emerging viral infections of public health importance, both serology and molecular diagnostic infrastructure has been strengthened across the country by establishing a network of virus research and diagnostic laboratories.

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