Dr Harsh Vardhan chairs 29th meeting of Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19

GoM reiterates importance of COVID Appropriate Behaviour as States unlock in a calibrated manner

Second wave still not over; Concerns in Pockets highlighted

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare chaired the 29th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 by a video-conference, here today. He was joined by Shri Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of Civil Aviation, Shri Nityanand Rai, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State, Health & Family Welfare.

Dr. Vinod K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog was present virtually.

The Group of Ministers placed on record its appreciation for all those who have worked tirelessly for COVID management, and for ramping up the coverage and speed of COVID vaccination across the country.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan gave a snapshot of India’s efforts to contain COVID-19 at the outset: “In the last 24 hours we have had only 46,148 cases making the active caseload decline significantly to 5,72,994 in the country. The recovery rate has been steadily increasing and stands at 96.80% today. 58,578 recoveries were registered in the last 24 hours. Today is the 46th day in succession where our daily recoveries outnumbered new cases. Our case fatality rate has been 1.30%, daily positivity rate at 2.94% and weekly positivity rate also stands at 2.94% which has been consistently below 5% for 21 days now.”
Speaking on COVID19 Vaccination drive, Dr. Harsh Vardhan observed, “India has achieved another milestone in COVID-19 vaccination and has overtaken USA in total number of Covid Vaccine doses administered so far. USA started vaccinating against COVID from 14 December 2020 whereas the drive was launched in India on 16th Jan 2021. Under the new policy of COVID Vaccination, the Union Government is procuring and supplying (free of cost) 75% of the vaccines being produced by the vaccine manufacturers in the country to States and UTs. Till today morning (8am), we have administered 32,36,63,297 vaccine doses to our countrymen in various categories. These include 1,01,98,257 Healthcare Workers (HCWs) who have taken the 1st dose and 72,07,617 HCWs who have taken the 2nd dose, 1,74,42,767 Frontline Workers (FLWs) (1st dose), 93,99,319 FLWs (2nd dose), and 8,46,51,696 for 18-44 years of age group (1st dose) and 19,01,190 for 2nd dose. 8,71,11,445 for over 45 years old to 60 years old (1st Dose), 1,48,12,349 for over 45 years old to 60 years old (2nd dose), 6,75,29,713 for above 60 years (1st Dose) and 2,34,08,944 for above 60 years (2nd Dose).”

He also apprised the GOM members on the trajectory of Mucormycosis infections that have occurred in this phase of COVID-19: Total of 40,845 cases has been reported of which 31,344 cases are rhinocerebral in nature. Fatality from the infections stands at 3,129. Of the total numbers, 34,940 patients had COVID (85.5%), 26,187 (about 64.11%) were co-morbid for diabetes while 21,523 (52.69%) of those infected were on steroids. 13,083 patients were in the age group 18-45 (32%), 17,464 were in the age group 45-60 (42%) while 10,082 (24%) patients were 60+ years of age.

The GOM strongly reiterated the importance of COVID appropriate behavior. Higher level of continued awareness building through sustained IEC campaigns was highlighted. Dr V K Paul emphasized on the benefits of mask wearing and hand hygiene.

Dr. Balram Bhargava, Secretary (Health Research) & DG (ICMR) also cautioned that the second wave of COVID-19 has still not subsided as 80 districts in the country still have high positivity. He advised against any laxity at this stage. He also explained that vaccines have been found effective against the alpha, beta, gamma and delta variants of COVID-19.

Dr. Sujeet K Singh, Director (NCDC) presented a detailed report on the trajectory of COVID in the States and UTs. He presented a granular analysis based on epidemiological findings of the trajectory of the pandemic in each state pointing out critical parameters like growth of cases, concentration of cases in particular districts and other trends like fatality and the variants of COVID-19 driving the infection in the affected states.

Active cases continue to be concentrated mainly in Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha which are reporting growth rate more than the national COVID Growth Rate. While 19 states are reporting fatality figures in single digit (less than 10), four states of Kerala, Karnataka,
Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are reporting more than hundred deaths daily.

Ms. Neerja Sekhar, Addl. Secretary, Information and Broadcasting apprised the GoM on how issues like vaccine hesitancy are being addressed through different mediums.

Shri Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary (Health), Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary, Ms. S. Aparna, Secretary (Pharma), Dr. Balram Bhargava, Secretary (Health Research) & DG (ICMR), Shri Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Shri Apurva Chandra, Secretary (Labour), Shri Vikash Sheel, Addl. Secretary (Health), Shri Rakesh Sanwal, Addl. Secretary, NITI Aayog, Ms. Neerja Sekhar, Addl. Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, Dr. Balram Bhargava, Secretary (Health Research) & DG (ICMR), Shri Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Shri Apurva Chandra, Secretary (Labour), Shri Vikash Sheel, Addl. Secretary (Health), Shri Rakesh Sanwal, Addl. Secretary, NITI Aayog, Ms. Neerja Sekhar, Addl. Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, Dr. Sunil Kumar, DGHS (MoHFW), Dr. Sujeeet K. Singh, Director, NCDC, representatives of Armed Forces (Armed Forces Medical Service), ITBP and other senior government officials participated through video conference.

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