

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

**RAJYA SABHA  
UNSTARRED Q. No 1725  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST, 2021**

**VACCINE DRIVE FOR CHILDREN BELOW 18 YEARS**

**1725: SHRI BIKASH RANJAN BHATTACHARYYA**

Will the Minister of **Health and Family Welfare** be pleased to state:

- a) the steps taken by Government in protecting children from third wave of COVID-19;
- b) by when the vaccine drive for children below 18 years will commence; and
- c) the measures taken by Government in creating resistance to tackle the third wave?

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

(a) to (c) Health is a state subject. Union Health Ministry has provided States with requisite technical support besides providing financial and logistic support to upgrade health infrastructure in States/UTs for managing pediatric cases besides managing any surge in cases in future. Some of the ongoing measures include:

- A three-tier arrangement of dedicated COVID-19 health facilities [(i) COVID Care Center (CCC); (ii) Dedicated COVID Health Centre (DCHC) and (iii) Dedicated COVID Hospital (DCH)] has been implemented in the country to reduce the risk of cross infection to non-COVID patients as well as to maintain continuity of non-COVID essential health services in the country.
- Government of India has roped in tertiary care hospitals under other ministries to supplement the hospital facilities. Further, many large temporary treatment facilities were established by DRDO to manage surge in COVID-19 cases in the country. The isolation bed capacity and ICU bed capacity was also enhanced continuously.

- The daily liquid medical oxygen (LMO) supply was increased by enhancement of LMO production in steel plants as well as in other LMO plants. Further, restrictions were also imposed on industrial use of oxygen.
- Online digital solutions viz. Oxygen Demand Aggregation system (ODAS) and Oxygen Digital Tracking System (ODTS) have been developed to ascertain the demand for medical oxygen from all medical facilities and to track their transportation.
- To avoid wastage of medical oxygen, guidelines on rational use of oxygen were issued on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020, and further revised and disseminated to States on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2021.
- To generate oxygen at the health facility level, PSA plants are being established in each district hospitals to reduce the burden on the medical oxygen supply grid across the country.
- Further, to fast-track the availability of Medical Oxygen in rural and peri-urban areas, more than 39,000 oxygen concentrators have been allocated to various States.
- A COVID Drugs Management Cell (CDMC) has been set up in the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) to oversee the management of smooth supply of drugs used in COVID-19 management.
- Action is initiated at the National level to augment production of critical drugs including import besides support in terms of equitable distribution of the critical supplies.
- A Drugs Coordination Committee (DCC) has been constituted as an institutional mechanism under Department of Pharmaceuticals for efficient decision making on all the issues with respect to COVID-19 related drugs including availability through inter-departmental consultations.
- All States/UT and State Drugs Controllers have been requested to verify stock of drugs and check other malpractices and take effective steps to curb hoarding and black marketing of some drugs like Remdesivir.
- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare continues to provide technical guidance for managing various aspects of COVID-19. So far more than 150 guidelines/advisories/SoPs/plans have been provided to States/UTs.
- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 issued a detailed SOP on COVID-19 Containment & Management in Peri-urban, Rural & Tribal areas. The SOP provides for strengthening primary level healthcare infrastructure at all levels to intensify COVID-19 response in peri-urban, rural & tribal areas, while continuing to provide other essential health services through inter-sectoral approach by involving community-based organizations, Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs), Pachayati Raj institutions, Urban Local bodies, etc.
- Further COVID-19 treatment protocols and advisories both for adults as well as pediatric age groups were issued and widely disseminated.

Union Government has provided financial support to States/UTs for ramping up Health Infrastructure and support all aspects of management of COVID-19.

- During the F.Y. 2019-20, funds to the tune of Rs.1113.21 crore was released to the States/UTs under NHM.
- In September 2020, the Union Government allowed the states to spend maximum 35% of annual allocation of funds under SDRF for the financial year 2019-20. The ceiling was further enhanced to 50% during the financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22 for containment measures of COVID-19.
- During the FY 2020-21, funds to the tune of Rs.8257.88 crore has been released to the States/UTs towards the India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package.
- In addition, 'India COVID-19 Emergency Response & Health System Preparedness Package: Phase-II' has also been approved by the Cabinet with Rs 23,123 crores (with Rs. 15,000 Cr as Central Component & Rs 8,123 Cr as State component) and is to be implemented from 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2022. So far Rs. 1827.78 crore has been released to States/UTs in 2021-22 under ECRP Phase-II in FY 2021-22.

It includes support to State/UT level for ramping up Health Infrastructure including those in rural, tribal and peri-urban areas closer to the community, providing support for procurement of drugs and diagnostics to enhance service delivery at district and sub district levels for management of COVID-19 cases (including pediatric care) and for maintaining a buffer of drugs, support for IT Interventions such as implementation of Hospital Management Information System and expanding access to tele-consultations in all districts, and support for capacity building and training for all aspects of management of COVID-19.

Further to ensure optimal management of pediatric COVID-19 cases, the following measures have been taken specifically:

- Union Health Ministry has advised States to undertake gap assessment of paediatric COVID Care facilities and upgrade health infrastructure with respect to pediatric cases management. This includes requirement of drugs, oxygen, equipment, consumables, trained human resources, infection prevention, referrals etc. if required, in collaboration with private sector.
- States/UTs have also been advised to identify and earmark designated specific areas for Paediatric Covid care in all three levels of Covid facilities (COVID Care Centers; Dedicated COVID Health Centers and Dedicated COVID Hospitals) and including accompanying parents/ family members.
- Guidelines on 'Operationalization of COVID care services for children and adolescents' was issued and disseminated to all States/UTs on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021.
- Further, with the intent to protect pediatric age group in current and any future surges of cases, Guidelines for management of COVID-19 in children were also issued on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The guideline provides guidance on the management of acute presentation of COVID-19 as well as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C) in children and adolescents found temporally related to COVID-19.

- Training modules for Paediatric essential COVID care services and communication strategy with messaging and information for Paediatric COVID care have been developed and widely circulated.
- As most pediatric cases are likely to be mild, states/UTs have been advised to undertake capacity building initiatives on management of COVID in the community settings using Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness (IMNCI) plus approach.

Under the National COVID Vaccination Program, Government of India is procuring vaccines and providing them free of cost to States and UTs. As on 31st July 2021, a total of about 48.40 crore doses have been supplied to States/UTs from all sources i.e. Government of India's Covid vaccine supply free of cost to all States/UTs, State/UTs and Private Hospitals procured Covid vaccine.

As of now vaccination is allowed for people over 18 years of age. Clinical trials for vaccination in children are still ongoing. Further necessary action shall be taken based on the results obtained during clinical trials after due expert consultations.