

English rendering of PM's address at the launch of Pan-India Rollout of COVID-19 Vaccination Drive

Posted On: 16 JAN 2021 1:11PM by PIB Delhi

My dear countrymen,

Namaskar!

The entire country is eagerly waiting for this day. For months together, the children, old and the young in every household in the country had the same question as to when the Corona vaccine would come. So now the Corona vaccine has come, and in a very short time. A few minutes from now, the world's largest vaccination campaign is going to be launched in India. I congratulate all my countrymen for this. Today, a number of scientists and those involved in the research of vaccines deserve praise, who were engaged day and night for the past several months in developing vaccines against the Corona. They did not care for any festival, day or night. It usually takes years to develop a vaccine. But, in such a short time, not one, but two 'Made in India' vaccines have been developed. Not only that, many more vaccines are also progressing at a rapid pace. This is a shining proof of India's strength, India's scientific proficiency and India's talent. For such achievements, national poet Ramdhari Singh Dinkar had said, "When human beings insist, even stones become water!!"

Brothers and sisters,

India's vaccination campaign is based on very humane and important principles. Those who need the most will be vaccinated first. Those who have the highest risk of corona infection will be vaccinated first. Our doctors, nurses, safai karamcharis (sanitation staff) in hospitals and paramedical staff are the first to be vaccinated. Whether they are in government hospitals or in private, they will be vaccinated on a priority basis. Thereafter, those who are responsible for protecting essential services and the country or law and order will be vaccinated. For example, our security forces, police personnel, fire brigade personnel, safai karamcharis (sanitation staff) etc. will be on priority. And, as I have said earlier, their number is about three crores. The cost of vaccination of all these people will be borne by the Government of India.

Friends,

For the elaborate preparedness of this vaccination campaign, trials and dry runs have been conducted in every nook and corner of the country in collaboration with the state governments. The specially created Co-WIN digital platform provides for registration to tracking of vaccination. You will receive information about the second dose after the first vaccine on your phone. And, I would like to remind all the countrymen again that it is very important to have two doses of corona vaccine. Do not commit a mistake of forgetting about the second dose after taking the first dose. And, as the experts say a gap of about one month will also be maintained between the first and the second dose. You also have to keep in mind that your body will develop the necessary immunity against the corona after two weeks of the second dose. Therefore, please do not be careless, or remove your masks or forget about the distance of two yards as soon as you get vaccinated. I implore you not to do these things. One more thing I would like to insist is that you have to display the same patience during vaccination as you did while fighting the corona.

Friends,

Never before has this kind of such a large-scale vaccination campaign been carried out in history. You can gauge the magnitude of the campaign from the first stage itself. There are more than 100 countries in the world with a less than three crore population. And India is inoculating three crore people in its first phase of vaccination. In the second phase, we have to take it to 30 crores. Those who are elderly, who suffer from serious illness, will be vaccinated in the next stage. Can you imagine that there are only three countries in the

world above a population of 30 crore – India itself, China and the United States. There is no country which has more population than these countries. Therefore, India's vaccination campaign is so enormous and it also shows India's strength. And I want to make one more point to the countrymen. Our scientists and experts have allowed emergency use only after they are confident about the safety and impact of both the Made in India vaccines. Therefore, the countrymen have to avoid any kind of propaganda, rumour and erroneous information.

Friends,

There is already a lot of credibility for the scientists of India developing vaccines, our medical system and India's process. We have gained this trust from our track record.

My dear countrymen,

Every Indian will be proud of the fact that the life-saving vaccines which are vaccinated to about 60 per cent of the children around the world are developed in India and pass through India's rigorous scientific processes. The world's confidence in India's scientists and our vaccine expertise is going to be further strengthened after the Made in India corona vaccines. There are some other important things that I must tell the countrymen today. These Indian vaccines are much cheaper than foreign vaccines and their use is also very simple. There are some vaccines abroad whose one dose costs up to 5,000 rupees and which have to be kept in the refrigerators at minus 70 degree temperatures. India's vaccines have been developed on technology that has been tried and tested in India for years. These vaccines are conducive to Indian conditions from storage to transportation. The same vaccines will now ensure a decisive victory for India in the fight against Corona.

Friends,

Our battle with corona has been of confidence and self-reliance. The resolution that we will not allow our confidence to weaken while fighting this difficult battle has been seen in every Indian. No matter how huge the crisis is, the countrymen have never lost self-confidence. When corona hit India, there was only one lab of corona testing in the country. We kept our faith in our potentiality and today we have a network of more than 2300 labs. Initially, we were dependent on foreign countries for essential items like masks, PPE kits, testing kits, ventilators etc. Today, we have become self-reliant in the manufacture of all these goods and are also exporting them. We have to strengthen this power of confidence and self-reliance even during vaccination.

Friends,

The great Telugu poet, Shri Gurajada Apparao, said, , meaning we should be of help to others, this selfless sense should be within us. The nation is not just made up of mud, water, pebbles, stones, but the nation means our people. The battle against corona has been fought by the entire country with this spirit. Today, when we look at the past year, we have learnt a lot, seen a lot, understood a lot as an individual, as a family and as a nation.

Today, when India is launching its vaccination campaign, I am reminded of those days. Everyone wanted to do something during the corona crisis, but he did not know the ways. In normal circumstances, the whole family is engaged to take care of a sick person. But this disease isolated the patient. In many places, small children suffering from the disease had to stay away from their mothers. The mother was upset, wept, but she could not do anything, could not comfort the child in her lap. Somewhere the elderly father was struggling with the disease all alone in a hospital. The children could not even visit him. Those who left us could not even get the farewell they deserved according to tradition. As much as we think about that time, it sends shivers down our spine and we become depressed.

But friends,

During that time of crisis, in the atmosphere of despair, someone was nourishing hope and was putting his life to risk to save us. Our doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, ambulance drivers, ASHA workers, safai karamcharis (sanitation staff), police personnel and other frontline workers gave priority to their responsibility towards humanity. Most of them stayed away from their children, their families and did not go home for many days. There are hundreds of friends who never made it to their homes; they sacrificed their lives to save each and every life. Therefore, the society is repaying its debt in a way by administering corona's first vaccine to the health care people. This vaccination is also a tribute by the indebted nation to all those colleagues

Brothers and sisters,

There were many calamities, epidemics, fierce wars fought in human history, but no one imagined a corona-like challenge. It was an epidemic whose experience was known neither to the science nor society. The images and news that were coming from all the countries were unsettling for the whole world as well as every Indian. In such a situation, the world's prominent experts were making different kinds of apprehensions about India.

But friends,

We have made the large population of India which was being described as our weakness our strength. India made sensitivity and participation the basis of the battle. While being vigilant round the clock and keeping an eye on every development, India took the right decisions at the right time. India had set up a high level committee within two weeks when the first case of Corona was detected on January 30. On this day last year, we had started surveillance. January 17, 2020 was the date when India issued its first advisory. India was among the first countries in the world to start screening passengers at its airports.

Friends,

The will, the courage, the collective power that India has displayed in the fight against Corona will serve as an inspiration for many generations to come. Recall the Janata Curfew, which was also a test of the restraint and discipline of our society against the corona, and in which every countrymen succeeded. The Janata Curfew prepared the country psychologically for lockdown. We kept the confidence of the country high by clapping, clanging utensils and lighting lamps.

Friends,

The most effective way to prevent the infection of an unknown enemy like corona was that one should stay put wherever he was as its implications were beyond the comprehension of many developed countries. Therefore, a decision regarding lockdown was taken in the country. This decision was not easy. We were aware that it was impossible to keep such a large population indoors. And here, everything in the country was going to be closed, there was going to be a lockdown. We also had an assessment of the impact it would have on the livelihood of the people and on the economy. But the country gave top priority to saving the lives of every Indian by following the mantra of ' ' (if there's life, then there's the world). And we have all seen how immediately the entire country, the whole society, stood by this spirit. I also interacted directly with the countrymen many times to inform them about the small but important things. On the one hand, while free food was provided to the poor, on the other, the smooth supply of milk, vegetables, ration, gas, medicines, etc such essentials was also ensured. In order to ensure proper arrangements in the country, the Ministry of Home Affairs started the 24x7 control room on which thousands of calls have been answered; people have been given solutions.

Friends,

In this fight against corona, we have set an example to the world at every step. At a time when some countries had left their citizens in China in the midst of widespread corona, India brought back every Indian stranded in China. And not only nationals from India, we also brought back the citizens of many other countries. More than 45 lakh Indians were evacuated to India from abroad under the Vande India Mission during the corona period. I remember when testing machines were falling short for Indians in a country; India sent the entire testing lab there so that the people coming to India would not face any problem.

Friends,

Today the entire world is acknowledging the way India has fought this epidemic. India also showed the example before the world how the central and state governments, local bodies, every government institution, social institutions, can work together. India has shown how ISRO, DRDO, army personnel, farmers and labourers can all work with a single-minded resolution. India was also among the leading countries which focused on the 'distance of two yards and mask is must'.

Brothers and sisters,

Today, it is the result of all these efforts that the mortality rate in India due to corona is low and the recovery

rate is very high. There are many districts in the country where not a single life was lost due to the corona. In these districts, every person has reached his home after recovering from the corona. There are many districts where not a single case of corona infection has been detected in the last two weeks. Even, India is moving ahead of the world as far as recovering from the economy affected through lockdown is concerned. India is among the few countries that provided essential medicines and essential medical assistance to more than 150 countries in the world, despite so many difficulties. Be it Paracetamol or Hydroxychloroquine or testing materials, India made every effort to save the people of other countries also. Now that we have developed our vaccines, the world is looking at India with hope and expectation. As our vaccination campaign progresses, many countries in the world will benefit from our experiences. We are committed that India's vaccines, our production capacity, serve the interest of the whole humanity.

Brothers and sisters,

This vaccination campaign will run long. We have got the opportunity to contribute to saving the lives of each and every individual. Therefore, volunteers are coming forward in the country to be part of the process associated with this campaign. I welcome them and would urge more volunteers to come forward and devote their time for this noble work. Yes, as I said earlier, masks, distance of two yards and cleanliness, will remain necessary even during and after the vaccination. If you are vaccinated, it does not mean that you discard other ways of protection from corona. Now we have to take a new resolution -- medicine as well as discipline. With this wish that all of you stay healthy, I wish the entire country all the best for this vaccination campaign! I also particularly congratulate and express my gratitude to the scientists, researchers and all those engaged in lab work who spent their entire year as a sage in their labs to provide these vaccines to the country and to humanity. Many many best wishes to all of you. Take early advantage of it. May you and your family remain healthy! May the entire humankind come out of this hour of crisis and all of us remain healthy! With this wish, many many thanks to you!

DISCLAIMER: This is the approximate translation of PM's speech. Original speech was delivered in Hindi.

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(Release ID: 1689026)