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Health workers must get vaccine first: PM

High-level meet reviews preparedness to combat COVID-19

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Vulnerable groups, including health workers and those in the general public, should be identified and prioritised for early vaccination, noted Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday while chairing a high-level meeting to review the planning and preparations for vaccination against COVID-19, as and when a vaccine is available.

He said vaccination of India's vast and diverse population will need to factor in issues including those related to management of medical supply chains, prioritisation of at-risk populations, coordination between different agencies involved, as well as the role of private sector and civil society.

Universal access

"The Prime Minister said that after the vulnerable population is vaccinated the same should be offered to "anyone, anywhere" without imposition of any domi-



Testing matters: A lab technician checking the results of a COVID-19 test.

tile-related restrictions for getting the vaccine. Also the vaccination must be affordable and universal - no person should be left behind and the entire process from production to vaccination should be monitored and supported in real time with the use of technology," noted a government press release.

The Prime Minister also directed officials to evaluate in a broad manner available technology options that can form the backbone of the national endeavour to vaccinate everybody in the most

efficient and timely manner and directed that detailed planning for such large-scale vaccination should be undertaken immediately.

The current status of vaccine development efforts were also reviewed at the meeting.

Meanwhile in an extensive exercise, Uttar Pradesh's 1.6 lakh ASHAs workers have tracked nearly 30.43 lakh migrant returnees in two phases - 11.24 lakh in the first and 19.19 lakh in the second phase, noted a release issued by the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday.

"They have assisted in contact tracing and community level surveillance. The ASHAs not only identified 7,965 persons with symptoms but also regularly followed up on their health status. They have facilitated sample collection from 2,232 returnees of which 203 were found to be positive and were referred to COVID health care services," the Ministry added.