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No option to select between 2 vaccines: Health Secretary

Roll-out to start on Jan. 16, supplies reach 4 major depots first

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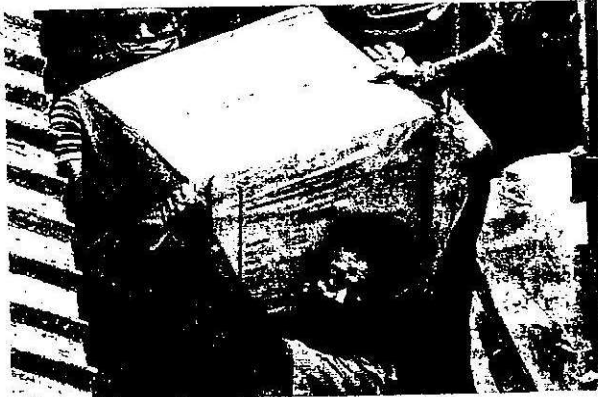
People will not have the option of making a choice between the two available COVID vaccines – Covishield and Covaxin – when the roll-out starts on January 16, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said at a press conference on Tuesday.

The Union government, he said, had agreed to procure 110 lakh Covishield doses from the Serum Institute of India (SII) at ₹200/dose and 55 lakh doses of Covaxin from Bharat Biotech (BBIL), of which 38.5 lakh doses is priced at ₹295/dose. BBIL would provide 16.5 lakh doses of Covaxin free of cost to the Central government as a special gesture.

Four other COVID-19 vaccines are under trial currently in the country and it had so far received “54,72,000 doses of the vaccine to be distributed, while 100% doses to be received by 14th January in all States/Union Territories”.

‘Continuous oversight’

“Our expectations from the States/UTs is that all logistics should be ready from January 16 and there should be continuous oversight and personal involvement in the entire process of roll-out. Also, there should be special focus on communication ac-



Gearing up: The first consignment of the Covishield vaccine arriving at the Bengaluru airport on Tuesday. •MURALI KUMAR K

6.47 lakh doses of Covishield reach city

Karnataka on Tuesday finally received its first consignment of the COVID-19 vaccine. The consignment comprising 54 boxes of 6.47 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine reached Bengaluru airport at 11.40 a.m. ▶ PAGE 3

tivities and utilisation of all types of channels to create an encouraging environment,” said Mr. Bhushan.

Vaccines would first reach four major depots in Karnal, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai, with all States having at least one State-level regional

Malaysia declares state of emergency

Malaysia's king declared a nationwide state of emergency on Tuesday to fight a coronavirus surge. Parliament was suspended, with critics charging it was a bid by the unstable government to cling to power. ▶ PAGE 11

vaccine store. “Uttar Pradesh has nine, Madhya Pradesh four, Gujarat four, Kerala three, Jammu & Kashmir two, Karnataka two and Rajasthan has two,” said Mr. Bhushan.

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No option to choose vaccines, says govt.

Indian Medical Council of Research (ICMR) head Dr. Balram Bhargava spoke about the vaccine regime that would be followed. "There will be a gap of 28 days between two doses and the effectiveness begins 14 days after the second dose. During the vaccination process and after that also, COVID-19 appropriate behaviour is a must."

'They are safe'
Member (Health) Niti Aayog Dr. V.K. Paul said the two vaccines available in India were safe and that there should not be any doubt about this. "They have been tested on thousands of people and the side-effects are negligible. All the vaccines

in the world used currently against COVID-19 have been cleared under the emergency-use framework. As we go ahead, we will have more options. India has also been able to get these vaccines at very competitive prices," he stated.

Mr. Bhushan noted that the situation was worrisome across the world with case graphs still climbing in the U.S., the U.K., Brazil and South Africa. "In India, 12,584 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours and active cases continue to decline and it is now less than 2.2 lakh. Only two States currently have more than 50,000 active cases - Maharashtra and Kerala," he added.