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MoH&FW organises capacity building workshop for health correspondents of NE states

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According to Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry, media is an important stakeholder in creating an enabling environment for covid appropriate behaviour and for vaccination in the North Eastern states



Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW) in partnership with UNICEF, held a capacity building workshop for media professionals and health correspondents of North Eastern States on the current COVID situation in India, the need to bust myths about COVID vaccines and vaccination, and reinforce the importance of COVID Appropriate Behaviour (CAB).

Media professionals and health correspondents of North Eastern States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura participated in the workshop virtually.

Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry addressed the workshop, which was attended by more than 130 health journalists and senior officials of DD News, All India Radio, Press Information Bureau (PIB) of these states. Agarwal, in his opening remark, commended media professionals for their sustained efforts in the collective fight against COVID-19. He said that media persons are major influencers of society as they can encourage people to vaccinate and follow COVID Appropriate Behaviour. He acknowledged that the media plays a constructive role in overcoming vaccine hesitancy by busting myths and fake news that is widely shared on social media platforms.

Highlighting India's COVID-19 management strategy, he said that there are three important components of the fight against covid i.e community ownership of covid appropriate behaviour, evidence-based reporting and busting myths on covid and vaccination. Agarwal while giving a brief snapshot of the prevailing COVID-19 situation in North East India said that 80 per cent of new cases in India reported from 90 districts and 14 out of 90 districts are from North-Eastern states. Highlighting specific challenges linked to the North Eastern States, he added that the Government of India has supported North Eastern States by following a proactive, pre-emptive, graded approach for fighting the COVID pandemic. He also shared the details of active cases and the status of vaccination drives in the North-Eastern states.

Acknowledging the media as an important stakeholder in creating an enabling environment for vaccination by busting myths, fears and apprehensions surrounding COVID vaccination, he added that more than 36.48 crore vaccine doses have been administered in the country to date. He urged media persons to create a Jan Andolan (Public Movement) by applauding community warriors as role- models.

Besides various reasons for vaccine hesitancy, which may be local and could vary for different community groups, the workshop highlighted Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI), its management, and the best practices while reporting on AEFI. Various queries of the media persons were also addressed during the workshop.

Senior officials of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of I&B, UNICEF, DD News, PIB, AIR News and health journalists from across the country participated in the national workshop.