



নাগরিক মঞ্চ

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NAGARIK MANCHA
Industry Labour Environment

To
Sri Akshay Kala
The Addl. Commissioner and Regional Director
Regional Office
Employees' State Insurance Corporation
"Panchdeep Bhawan"
5/1, Grant Lane
Kolkata 700012

01 June 2021

Subject: Appeal during the Times of Covid-19

Respected Sir,

We are of the firm believe that the implementation of ESIC's decision of transforming four out of its fifteen hospitals in West Bengal into 'Covid Facilities' has made a significant positive difference on the ground level. Thousands of workers and their family members have received care, attention and treatment during the pandemic, thanks to your decision of the ESIC.

During the ongoing second wave, medical practitioners, scientists and experts are saying that the only way to curb the pandemic is by vaccinating the majority of our population, as soon as possible. Vaccination can also be one sure way of protecting ourselves from the third or fourth waves, if and when it arrives.

Vaccination has started from 16 January 2021. At present the medical infrastructure under the Government of West Bengal, along with some private operators are vaccinating the general population but, a lot more needs to be done, by all concerned.

In West Bengal there are about 60 lakh ESI beneficiaries, comprising of 20 lakh registered IPs and their dependants, who are covered by ESI medical and sickness benefit schemes. There are hundreds of 'labour-lines' in close proximity of factories related to jute, cotton, engineering, iron & steel etc, where the workers stay. Whether they are permanent or temporary, organised or unorganised, most industrial workers 'live' in these cramped, unhealthy 'labour-lines'. The less we talk about the practical possibility of 'social or physical distancing', the better. Again, vaccination is the only antidote to the nation's malady.

The workers and their family members, residing mostly in these well demarcated crowded clusters, need to be vaccinated as early as possible, for their own safety and also for the wellbeing of the general population living and working in the geographical proximity.

The Central Government, in order to speed up the entire process, has allowed the State Government and the other Vaccine Centres, including private hospitals, to procure vaccines directly from manufacturers and vaccinate the population as quickly as possible.

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Under the above circumstances we earnestly request you to kindly take personal initiative to galvanise the entire ESIC infrastructure in order to vaccinate the beneficiaries of ESIC in West Bengal. For this purpose, we are sure, you will consider utilising the hospitals, service dispensaries and local offices under the ESI.

You will appreciate that it is not enough to categorise some of your own beneficiaries theoretically as 'super-spreaders' or 'vulnerable population'. The ESIC will need to take the decision to vaccinate such workers who are working in industrial units along with scores or hundreds or even thousands of others. They too are frontline workers in more senses than one. Besides the ESIC will also need to identify and vaccinate such vulnerable workers among their IPs as a matter of priority, who for example, work in transport industry; in market places; in medicine shops; in loading-unloading activities; or in such other public interfaces where they are vulnerable to contract infection and thereby infect others.

Our organisation has been involved with issues related to industrial workers for the last 32 years. We are concerned when we find that people's lives are often subjected to severe stress, disorder or disaster and during such phases there is a huge wastage of social resources which is perhaps avoidable by best practices in good governance. It is our understanding that during such critical phases taking effective, rational and logical steps is way more effective than merely acting as per rules.

We urge ESIC to procure vaccines and subsequently manage and monitor vaccination in West Bengal, for all the registered IPs, and dependant beneficiaries.

We request you to kindly do the needful at your earliest convenience.

We approach you sincerely, with great expectations,

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely

Naba Dutta

Naba Dutta
General Secretary
Nagarik Mancha