

Maharashtra lockdown likely to be extended for 15 days, CM to take final call- Rajesh Tope

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Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will take a final decision on extending the lockdown in Maharashtra till 31 May, minister Rajesh Tope said today after a cabinet meeting.

At Wednesday's Cabinet meeting, the state health department and ministers proposed to extend the lockdown in Maharashtra for 15 days, Health Minister Rajesh Tope said.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will take a final decision on the matter, the Maharashtra Health Minister was quoted as saying by news agency ANI.

The Maharashtra government first imposed a lockdown on 22 April, which was later extended till 15 May amid fears over the third wave of the pandemic.

Maharashtra reported 46,781 new Covid-19 cases in a day, taking the tally to 52,26,710, while 816 more patients succumbed to the infection, said the state health department.

The positivity rate has fallen to 17.36% while the fatality rate is down to 1.49%, the health department said.

Covid vaccination drive in Maharashtra

The vaccination drive was suspended in few districts of the state on Wednesday due to the shortage of coronavirus vaccines.

Health Minister Tope said that Serum Institute of India chief Adar Poonawalla has promised the state CM to deliver 1.5 crore doses of Covishield after 20 May. "We will start the vaccination for 18-44 age group after we receive the vaccine," the Maharashtra minister said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Tope said the state government is considering to hold the Covid vaccination drive for the 18-44 age group temporarily due to a shortage of vaccine doses.

The vaccine doses currently available with the state will instead be used to vaccinate people of 45 years and above as administering the second jab of these people is a priority, he said.

In Maharashtra, the third phase of the vaccination drive nominally commenced on May 1 even after a shortage of vaccine doses in order to mark Maharashtra Day's celebration. The state government has promised to provide free vaccines to those between the age group 18-44 years so as to combat the second wave of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra minister Satej Patil has said that the state government made maximum use of technology to provide relief to people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a release issued on National Technology Day on Tuesday, the state minister for information technology said as the movement was restricted due to the pandemic, citizens were forced to work from home and they were able to perform everyday tasks with a click of the button.

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"The Maharashtra government used technology to help citizens during the pandemic. The government made available portable oxygen containers, while state-run helplines are functioning 24/7 and several patients received help through social media platforms such as Twitter," Patil said.