

## **Covid-19 nasal vaccine could be a game-changer, says AIIMS epidemiologist**

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**NEW DELHI:** As Hyderabad-based drug maker Bharat Biotech has got regulatory approval to conduct Phase-3 clinical trials of its intranasal COVID-19 vaccine as a booster dose, senior epidemiologist in All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi, Dr Sanjay Rai, on Sunday said the vaccine could be a game-changer in the fight against the pandemic if it provides mucosal immunity.

"If this vaccine gives mucosal immunity, then it would be a great achievement for the human race. There are 33 vaccines all over the world but none is effective in preventing the infection. We are hoping that this vaccine will provide mucosal immunity that can prevent further infection," Dr Rai told ANI here.

As the Budget Session starts from Monday, the AIIMS Senior epidemiologist expects that need of the hour is to strengthen the public health system at all primary, secondary level and tertiary levels.

"This is not the last pandemic, we must prepare for future pandemics and to handle that, we need to strengthen the public health system," he said.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has granted permission to Hyderabad-based biotechnology firm Bharat Biotech, the manufacturer of India's first indigenous COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin, for intranasal booster dose trials. The trials will be done at nine different sites.

Earlier this month, DCGI's Subject Expert Committee (SEC) had granted 'in-principle approval to Bharat Biotech for the conduct of 'Phase III superiority study and Phase III booster dose study' for its intranasal COVID vaccine BBV154.

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