



FEDERATION OF INDIAN PILOTS

FIP/CABINET SEC GOI/21 - 07

01st May 2021

To
Shri Rajiv Gauba, IAS
Cabinet Secretary
Government of India

Sub: Urgent Need to Prioritise Vaccination of Commercial Pilots to protect India's Strategic Interests

Sir,

The Federation of Indian Pilots is a registered association comprising approximately 5000 commercial pilots covering the entire spectrum of the Indian civil aviation industry including all the major airlines.

As you are aware, the civil aviation sector forms the backbone of our national effort to fight the ongoing pandemic. Essential supplies including vaccines, oxygen storage and generating equipment and evacuation operations are being flown on a regular basis by our member pilots. Some of them are also engaged in flying VVIPs including the Honourable President, Vice President and Prime Minister.

In spite of the above, commercial aircrew in India have been left out of the definition of Front-Line Workers (FLW) and therefore, have not been prioritised for Covid vaccination, leaving many to fend for themselves or wait for their turn as per the availability of vaccine stocks. Even ancillary staff such as central armed police personnel stationed at airports have all been vaccinated on priority and so have essential staff of other transport related sectors, such as the Indian Railways. Even our professional counterparts, the pilots of the Indian armed forces, have also been vaccinated on priority.

Due to the varied scope of their duty, commercial pilots are highly exposed to Covid related risks and are required to maintain stringent regulatory fitness standards at all times in order to fly.

With the ever-increasing number of Covid cases, including fatalities, being reported amongst our aircrew this is becoming a race against time. It would be appreciated that replacing medically unfit pilots who are highly limited in number and highly specialised personnel may not be possible beyond a critical figure and may compromise or disrupt India's aerial efforts to secure a global supply chain of essential medical supplies and connectivity between important destinations.

Furthermore, due to the wide geographical scope of operations, aircrew are easily susceptible to being infected by new variants of the virus that may not have reached the country yet. Therefore, vaccinated aircrew would act as the country's first line of defence or buffer against further mutations of the virus.

It is also reliably learnt that certain strains of the virus are evading RT/ PCR tests which makes it imperative that vaccination is the only solution to prevent this disease from ruining our aerial supply lines.

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It is estimated that approximately 1200 vials of the vaccine are required to protect the majority of our commercial pilots and to secure our nation's geo-strategic interests.

Keeping in view the gravity of the situation and the above facts, may we request you to direct all relevant central and state governments to prioritise the vaccination of all commercial pilots across all age groups in the strategic interest of the nation.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully

Capt. Surinder Mehta
President – Federation of Indian Pilots

cc: Secretary, MoCA
cc: Secretary, MoHFW