Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan to dedicate India's First Indigenous H5N1 (Clade 2.3.2.1a) Chicken Vaccine to the Nation on 20 November

ICAR-NIHSAD Develops Indigenous H5N1 Vaccine to Strengthen Poultry Disease Control

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The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Rural Development, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, will dedicate India’s first indigenous Inactivated H5N1 (Clade 2.3.2.1a) Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Vaccine for Chickens to the Nation on 20th November, 2026 at ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (ICAR-NIHSAD), Bhopal. Developed indigenously by ICAR-NIHSAD, Bhopal, the vaccine is the first of its kind in India against the H5N1 HPAI virus of Clade 2.3.2.1a.

Background

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), commonly known as bird flu, is a serious disease affecting poultry. Outbreaks can cause nearly 100 per cent mortality among infected birds, leading to major financial losses for poultry farmers due to the large-scale culling of birds and restrictions on trade. The impact is not limited to poultry farms; it can also affect global trade, prices of poultry products and the livelihoods of farmers. Since the first detection of the disease in India in 2006, more than 500 combined outbreaks of H5N1 and H5N8 subtypes have been reported in the country.

A major outbreak of bird flu could reduce India's GDP growth by up to 1.5 per cent, while more than 20 per cent of the country's poultry population could be at risk if the disease spreads without control. The 2006 bird flu outbreak caused estimated direct and indirect losses of Rs. 2,200–3,000 crore. An outbreak in Manipur also resulted in losses equivalent to 0.5 per cent of the state's GDP. The disease is also a public health concern. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 1,003 human cases of H5N1 avian influenza, including 479 deaths, have been reported across 25 countries, including India, since 2003.

Studies of the virus have shown that the H5N1 strain known as Clade 2.3.2.1a has been responsible for most bird flu outbreaks in chickens. In recent times, infections caused by this strain have also been detected in different animal species, including mammals, along

with three human cases. This makes it important to control the spread of this virus to reduce financial losses for poultry farmers and prevent its transmission from chickens to other animals and humans.

At present, no specific commercial vaccine is available against the H5N1 virus of Clade 2.3.2.1a. Therefore, developing an indigenous vaccine is important for India. The vaccine developed by ICAR-NIHSAD aims to address this need by providing protection against Clade 2.3.2.1a H5N1 virus strains circulating in the country.

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