



Covid-Vaccination Related Challenges

Why in News

There was a **decrease in the number of vaccine doses** administered in the week starting 1st May 2021, after the government “opened up” vaccination beyond priority groups, to its **lowest level in eight weeks**.

- **Covid-19** vaccines are being developed at a pace faster than for any other disease, yet there are shortages.

Key Points

▪ Global Issues:

◦ Huge Population:

- With about seven billion people to be vaccinated worldwide, with mostly two jabs (Doses) each, the **demand is obviously very high**.

◦ Self-Centered Rich:

- **More than 80% of available vaccines have been ordered and/or already stocked by a few countries** representing only about 20% of the world population.
- Even with a **World Health Organization (WHO)**-led effort like **COVAX**, **only about 1% of the African population has received vaccines** so far.

◦ Delay in Emergency Approvals:

- Till now **only three vaccines**—Pfizer, Moderna, and Janssen—have been **approved by the US**.

- The **most affordable AstraZeneca** vaccine still awaits approval.

- Approval for **Russia's Sputnik V** was **recently denied in Brazil**.

- Vaccines of **China's Sinovac and Sinopharm** are **not yet approved in western countries**.

▪ Challenges in India:

◦ Limited Suppliers:

- **Limited capacity of the two vaccine (COVAXIN & COVISHIELD) manufacturers** who are now being piled upon with much bigger orders from state governments and private hospitals that may take months to fulfil.

◦ Supply Chain Gap:

- There is a big gap in the supply chain of the ambitious programme to vaccinate all its adult population.
- Although **India ranks number three after the US and China in the absolute number of vaccines administered**, only about **13% of its population has received a single jab and about 2% fully vaccinated**.

- Many countries have already vaccinated more than half their adult population.
- **Unequal Procurement Process:**
 - The revised vaccine procurement process **builds in a skew against smaller hospitals in cities and towns** in comparison to their bigger counterparts in simply getting access to the shots, and a more **disconcerting urban-rural divide** in terms of where healthcare facilities are vis-à-vis the already-established supply-chain map.
- **Digital Divide:**
 - There is the issue of **mandatory Co-Win registration** as part of the new decentralised distribution strategy, which potentially adds to an entry barrier that could be tougher to navigate for users in the hinterland, both in terms of **access to the platform** and an **English-only interface for users so far**.
 - Mandatory online registration introduces a **skew in favour of urban centres**, given that a little over half of India's population has access to broadband Internet, while **rural tele-density is under 60%**.
 - States including **Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh having among the country's lowest tele-density**.
 - It is more difficult for those with **less access and greater unfamiliarity with technology**, including access to a smartphone or computer.

Way Forward

- Efficacious and **safe vaccines**, regardless of their origin, **need to be critically but quickly examined and added to the pool**.
- India's **Covid-19 vaccine drive will be a monumental mission**, not just in terms of vaccinating its own population, but also vaccinating a large part of the world thanks to its position as the world's leading vaccine producer. **Addressing the issues associated with the development and distribution of vaccines** will augment the effort to efficiently get vaccines to hundreds of millions in the shortest period of time.

Source: IE

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