

Twitter Thread by D I N A K A R



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Vaccine Politics - Let us trust in Science.

Long Thread.

1. India has been undertaking the world's largest vaccination drive. In less than three months, we have managed to provide more than 100 million doses across the country, which is more than the population of Germany.

2. The country has already achieved one of the highest daily vaccinations per day across the globe with 4.3 million vaccinations, which is close to the population of New Zealand.

3. India has also achieved the fastest rate of reaching the 100 million vaccination milestone, ahead of the United States (US) and China. Our daily vaccination rates are also among the highest in the world.

4. This doesn't mean that there is no scope for improvement. Of course, we need to expand capacity and continue innovating, which has been our approach throughout the pandemic.

5. In the beginning, there are two insinuations — first, that there is a vaccine crunch, and, second, that everyone immediately needs a vaccine. We must understand that vaccines are a scarce commodity in the world.

6. That is why India, as well as other countries, decided to prioritize groups which are vulnerable. The primary purpose of vaccination is mortality reduction and decreasing the burden on the health care system. This was laid down by the government in 2020 itself.

7. The first phase of the vaccination drive prioritizes vulnerable groups such as older citizens, health care workers, and front-line workers.

For instance, older citizens face an acute threat as those aged 45 and above have accounted for almost nine out of 10 Covid-19 deaths.

8. Across the globe, countries have prioritized vulnerable groups in their vaccination programme as the supply and delivery capacity remained limited initially. Similar to India, the first phase of the vaccination drive in many countries had age and occupation-based eligibility.
9. For instance, in the US, the Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention had recommended that vaccines should initially be given to health care workers, front-line essential workers and those aged 75 years and above
10. India has set a target of vaccinating around 300 million vulnerable citizens by August, and we are very much on course to achieve that. There is no supply crunch when it comes to achieving this target.
11. Here, it is also important to understand that vaccines are a preventive tool which works after a lag period of six to 10 weeks. It is not a treatment to be administered to reduce the case-load in the middle of a wave.
12. To focus only on vaccines and not pay attention to ramping up testing, tracing and proper treatment will be counterproductive.
13. It is amusing that some newspapers argued against India's vaccine maitri programme, and advocates an inward-looking approach for the sake of a populist argument.
14. Is it not a good thing that India has set an example for the world to follow, earned strategic advantage on various dimensions, and is being appreciated globally for its assistance?
15. If the government had refused to supply vaccines to other countries, the same newspaper would have criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi for being a "vaccine nationalist".
16. However, this advocacy of a protectionist and "closed" India is again bereft of the facts. A large proportion of the 60 million-plus vaccines sent abroad were either commercially exported or supplied through the COVAX programme
17. A substantial share was part of contractual obligations that the manufacturer had to fulfil. We must remember that manufacturing rights are accompanied with contractual obligations.
18. The next question constructs and demolishes a straw man to make a point. It says that the government-approved Covaxin based on faith. This sentence does not do as much disservice to the regulator and Bharat Biotech as it does to the credibility of the newspapers.
19. Data on the safety and immunogenicity of Covaxin, based on trials held in India, were available when it was approved; only the efficacy figures were pending.
20. The government is as eager, if not more than the newspaper, to ensure that other vaccines also get approved. It is surprising that some of those who opposed the "clinical trial use" approval for Covaxin are now arguing in favour of completely bypassing bridging trials.

21. Imagine what would happen to the confidence of people if a hastily-approved vaccine which works well elsewhere causes some issues in the Indian population.

22. Adding to Politics, [@raghav_chadha](#) said -

“the BJP-led Centre claims that Pakistan exports terrorism to India and on the other, India is exporting vaccines to the neighbouring country. India is directly or indirectly exporting more than six crore vaccine doses to Pakistan.”

23. One needs to specify the context in which Pakistan is getting Made in India vaccine.

It is GAVI Alliance (formerly the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization) that is providing Pakistan the vaccine dosages from the slot it purchased from Indian company.

24. AAP's line of argument that India should withhold export of vaccines till 130 crore Indians get vaccination may sound alluring but lacks practicality.

25. Though India is the major global manufacturer of vaccines, international co-operation is must for vaccine development.

26. See the current examples. Serum institute's Covishield was developed in collaboration with AstraZeneca of UK. Another vaccine in pipeline for large-scale Indian manufacturing, Sputnik V, comes from Russia.

27. The Quad countries have pledged technical and financial support for India to work on vaccine from Johnson and Johnson

Thus, it is impractical for India to isolate itself in the name of vaccine nationalism.

28. India's Vaccine Maitri has established India as a credible global supply chain in the post-covid world. The significance of this can't be measured by wearing narrow-sighted political lens.

29. Wishful thinking has no limits, but the track record of Delhi government in managing Covid-19 situation whenever a spike occurred belies their hype.

30. And demand of MH for getting more doses - PM Modi Said :

“It is incorrect to think that we can address the problem by moving the stocks to one particular state. We need to think about the whole country.”

31. “An analysis of production capacities shows that between SII and Bharat Biotech, which makes Covaxin, India's current capacity is around 75 million doses a month, or roughly 2.5 million a day. Over the last week, 3.1 million doses a day on average have been delivered.

32. India needs to complete the vaccination of a population that is estimated to be at 33 crores that comes under the group of health workers, frontline workers and people above 45 years of age.

33. Telangana :

Below Article from New Indian express, gives us the glimpse into status in Telangana.

Vaccines are not opened till a group of 10 to 12 are assembled.

This does not mean, Vaccines are not available.

By Express News Service

HYDERABAD: The Tika Utsav called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from April 11 to 14, in a bid to boost Covid-19 vaccination in the country, did not take off as expected in Hyderabad and elsewhere in the State on the inaugural day, with not enough people turning up in big groups at vaccination centres.

Though vaccine doses were available in adequate numbers, and there were enough people who were willing to be vaccinated, health staff, keen on preventing wastage, sent them back as they did not arrive at the centres in batches of a minimum of 10 people. This is because, once a vial consisting of 10 doses is opened, all of it must be administered within four hours, or thrown away. As there was no guarantee that requisite number of people would gather at the centres, the staff sent away those who came alone, or in twos or fours. The vaccination was carried out without much difficulty in the morning, but post lunch, there was slackness in the arrival of people — at any given point of time, there was not a minimum of 10 people.

34. Other Measures :

Sputnik should be approved very soon as they fulfilled the requirements of the government.

Limitations have been put on export of Remdesivir till situation improves.

35. Conclusion :

Some matters should be beyond petty politics.

At least in the matters of health, let science guide us and not the news papers and politicians.

End.

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