100 crore COVID-19 Vaccine Doses

Why in news?

India completed 100 crore doses of COVID-19 vaccines on 21 October 2021, in about 9 months since the vaccination drive began.

Why is it laudable?

- This is the fastest rate of vaccination, possibly anywhere in the world.
- China has administered almost twice the number of doses to its citizens but it had also started out much earlier than anyone else.
- India began only in mid-January 2021, with a limited supply of vaccines.
- The shortage of vaccines was felt most acutely during the devastating second wave, the worst phase of the pandemic.
- The challenge was handled with contributions of vaccine manufacturers and the wide network of healthcare workers.
- Crossing the one-billion mark also became possible as India stopped the export of vaccines, impacting most low- and middle-income countries.

What are the tasks ahead?

- The 100 crore doses achievement is just a milestone and not the destination.

Adult population

- The bigger task is to vaccinate the entire adult population of about 94 crore.
- But in this goal, India has just crossed the halfway mark.
- Even as vaccine supply is increasing, the pace of the vaccination drive has to be speeded up to meet the objective.
- Efforts should be directed at increasing the pace of second dose vaccination.

Children

- If the entire population of about 135 crore is taken into account, then an even smaller fraction of the job has been completed.
- Vaccines for people under the age of 18 years are just being approved, and there is a long way to go.

Booster doses

- As of now, India looks all set to vaccinate about 70-80% of its adult population by the end of 2021.

- But by that time, the group that received their vaccine in January and February might find its immunity waning.
- India thus has to remain open to the possibility of providing booster doses from sometime in 2022.
- The discussion on booster doses in India, their frequency, timing, etc is yet to begin.

Reference:

1. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/scripting-history-the-hindu-editorial-on-100-crore-covid-19-vaccine-doses/article37116112.ece
2. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/total-covid-19-vaccine-doses-administered-in-india-crosses-100-crore-milestone/article37102911.ece?homepage=true
3. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/100-crore-vaccine-doses-a-reason-for-cheer-and-the-need-to-keep-going-7584063/

