3rd ICMR Serological Survey

Why in news?

Recently ICMR has released its 3rd serological survey to ascertain the spread of COVID-19.

What does the report say?

- It shows that nearly one in five Indians (270 million) may have been infected & there has been a three-fold rise in infections when compared to the 2nd serological survey.
- There has also been a five-fold rise of the infection in those aged 10-17 years & 3rd edition includes a serological survey of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff.
- This reveals that nearly 25% of this composition are infected which is significantly above the national average.
- It emphasises that significant proportion of people are still potentially vulnerable, underscoring the need to be vaccinated and continue with social distancing and use of masks.

What does this vary from other surveys?

- ICMR survey-results appear to be more conservative in estimating the true spread of disease when compared to city-focused serology surveys in Delhi and mathematical modelling estimates.
- Experts say that there is declining trend in infections since September and there is absence of multiple peaks in corona virus cases and speeding up herd immunity.
- But neither ICMR survey nor city-wide survey evaluated how long antibodies persist and if certain virus mutant variants can overcome the protection from antibodies.

What are the concerns?

- It is now no longer useful to know that 80% of India is still vulnerable given that vaccines are available.
- Rather, such surveys must shift focus on certain questions- rise in spread among teenagers and children mean that they must be vaccinated earlier

than the scheduled time.
- It should focus on whether companies should accelerate trials to test protection in children and rise in cases in rural India mean that they be given vaccines earlier.
- ICMR and the government health facilities must coordinate with a broader spectrum of specialists to investigate on these questions which can be used to guide and modify vaccination policy.

Source: The Hindu

