Improving Cold Chain Systems

Why in news?

Robust cold chain systems are an investment in India's future pandemic preparedness.

What has the pandemic reminded us?

- India accounts for the second highest caseload of COVID-19 globally.
- The nation had to take on the task of rolling out one of the largest vaccination drives in the world which is not new to India.
- India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP), launched in 1985 to deliver routine immunisation, showcased its strengths in managing large-scale vaccine delivery.
- But the pandemic reminded us that vaccines alone do not save lives, vaccination does.
- While we have set up a strong service delivery network, the pandemic showed us that there were weak links in the chain, especially in the cold chain.

What is the need for a cold chain system?

- Cold chain system augments the immunisation landscape.
- It will be the only way to ensure access to the last mile with life-saving vaccines.
- It reduces vaccine wastage thus reducing the cost implications.
- It also aids in achieving the immunisation targets.
- Robust cold chain systems are an investment in India's future pandemic preparedness.

What about the cold chain management in India?

- Nearly half the vaccines distributed around the world go to waste, in large part due to a failure to properly control storage temperatures.
- In India, close to 20% of temperature-sensitive healthcare products arrive damaged or degraded because of broken or insufficient cold chains, including a quarter of vaccines.
- India's UIP comprises upwards of 27,000 functional cold chain points of which 3% are located at the district level and above while the remaining 95% are located below the district level.
- The Health Ministry has been digitising the vaccine supply chain network in recent years through the use of cloud technology, such as with the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN).
- The role played by supportive infrastructure for cold chain such as a regular supply of electricity is essential for which the potential of solar-driven technology must be explored.

eVIN is an innovative technological solution aimed at strengthening immunization supply chain systems across the country being implemented under National Health Mission (NHM) by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

References

1. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/improving-cold-chain-systems/article65423158.ece
2. http://nhp.gov.in/electronic-vaccine-intelligence-network(evin)_pg

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