India’s Revised Covid-19 Vaccination Policy

Why in news?

Indian Prime Minster recently announced the shift to centralised procurement of Covid-19 vaccines.

How was it earlier?

- From January 16 to April 30, 2021, the Centre had procured and allocated vaccine doses to the states.
- This was available for free vaccination of three priority groups.
- These were healthcare workers, frontline workers, and persons above the age of 45.
- From May 2021, States were allowed to procure 25% of the vaccines manufactured and the Centre, 50%.
- [States had to procure 25% of the doses from the open market to vaccinate the 18-44 year age group.]

What is the new policy?

- **Procurement** - From June 21, 2021, the Centre will be directly procuring 75% of the doses manufactured.
- It will distribute this among the states.
- Vaccines will continue to be free for all those who choose to get their shot at government centres.
- **Private centres** - Private hospitals will have exclusive access to the remaining 25%.
- However, private centres can charge only Rs 150 as service charge over and above the vaccine price.
- The maximum vaccine price is Rs 780 for Covishield, Rs 1,410 for Covaxin and Rs 1,145 for Sputnik V.
- **Distribution** - The vaccines will be allocated to the states based on three positive metrics.
- These are population, disease burden and the progress of vaccination.
- One negative metric will be the wastage of vaccines.
- A state reporting good vaccination coverage will get a higher number of doses.
- On the other hand, a state recording a higher wastage will receive a lower

number.

Why is the course correction now?

- The Supreme Court had termed the earlier vaccine policy “irrational and arbitrary”.
- Several states had faced difficulties in procuring and managing the funding of vaccines.
- The Centre saw itself desperately short of supply right in the middle of India’s deadly second wave.
- The hospital emergencies worsened the Centre’s panic.
- So it has taken up the responsibility of directly buying vaccines to States.
- The course correction in vaccine policy should help improve India’s response to the pandemic.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

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