Reforming WHO

What is the issue?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi once again brought up the issue of reforming the WHO while addressing the heads of countries at the second global COVID-19 summit.

What is the global COVID-19 summit?

- The first global virtual summit on Covid-19 was hosted by President Biden in 2021.
- The second summit was held virtually and was co-hosted by United States, Belize, Germany, Indonesia, and Senegal.
- It included the participation of more than 30 countries.
- The 2nd summit brought in more than $3 from the participants, multilateral and philanthropic organisation in addition to commitments made in 2021 and 2022.

To know about WHO, click here

What issues in WHO spurred the criticism?

- **Declaration of pandemic**- The world body's delay in declaring the pandemic a global emergency has spurred criticisms worldwide.
- **Preventing the spread**- There were many early steps that could have prevented the spread of the virus, but the WHO failed to advise governments correctly.
- **Patent waivers**- The issue of patent waivers, where a joint India-South Africa proposal made in 2020 has not yet been adopted.
- **Methodology on data estimation**- WHO's methodology and model for estimating the Covid deaths was also challenged by India.
- **Approval of vaccines**- India also protested the long delay in obtaining WHO approval for the Indian-made Covaxin developed by Bharat Biotech, which was finally given in November 2021.
- **Free and fair investigation**- The reluctance of China to share vital information regarding the novel coronavirus and its refusal to allow WHO to investigate freely and fairly on the origin of the virus have highlighted the need to strengthen WHO.

How can the body be strengthened?

- **Increased mandatory funding**- For several years, the mandatory contribution has accounted for less than a fourth of the total budget, thus reducing the level of predictability in WHO's responses.
- The agency must be equipped with more powers to demand that member states comply with the norms and to alert WHO in case of disease outbreaks that could cause global harm.
- **Penalties for non-compliance**- Under the legally binding international health regulations, member states are expected to have in place core capacities to identify, report and respond to public health emergencies.
- But non-compliance does not attract any penalties which need to be changed for any

meaningful protection from future disease outbreaks.

- **Vaccine approvals**- There has been a demand for a review of the health agency's processes on vaccine approvals.

References

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