# Vaccine Diplomacy

## Why in news?

There is a disparity in accessing the Covid-19 vaccines across the world.

## What are the concerns regarding the availability of vaccines?

- The UN Secretary-General observed that 10 countries has administered 75 per cent of all the Covid-19 vaccines.
- He also stated that more than 130 countries did not receive a single dose of vaccine.
- In the GAVI-COVAX alliance, most of the vaccine stocks are cornered by high-income countries.
- It is notable that countries such as Uganda have paid more per dose than the EU.
- So, the COVAX-GAVI facility has not lived up to its promise of reaching out to the poorer countries.

## What is the status of India's Vaccine availability?

- Just as in the case of the HIV-AIDS pandemic, India has emerged as a global leader in both production and distribution of Covid-19 vaccine.
- India's vaccine productive capacity has met its own current demand of two million doses a day.
- According to the Ministry of External Affairs data, India has also distributed about 24 million doses of vaccine to a host of countries.
- Moreover, India has even supplied 0.5 million doses of vaccine to Canada and further 1.5 million doses is also contracted.
- Earlier Lancet appraised the Phase III trial results of Covaxin and it is likely to get approved as a regular vaccine by the approval committee soon.
- Hence India can play a key role in addressing this disparity.

## How can India address this disparity?

- Last year in the WTO, India-South Africa proposed to waive TRIPS agreement temporarily.
- Now US pharma majors are urging US administration to oppose this proposal despite this vaccine disparity.

- India can showcase its vaccine diplomacy by emerging as an independent supplier of low-cost vaccines.
- Being backed by more than half the WTO members, India can highlight the **Doha Ministerial declaration** (2001).
- The declaration calls for flexibilities in TRIPS in the event of a health emergency (HIV/AIDS).
- C-TAP (Covid-19 Technology Access Pool) facility created by the WHO finds no takers among the global pharma companies and their choice is COVAX facility.
- Now it is time go beyond COVAX facility and India should assert its TRIPS waiver position.
- India should facilitate in ensuring adequate supply and even distribution of vaccines to poor countries in the time of public health emergencies.

**Source: Business Line**

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