



DAILY MAINS NEWSLETTER

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Mains Value Addition

TRIPS waiver for COVID-19

Syllabus-- GS 3: Intellectual Property rights

Analysis: -

- WTO Chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has urged the proponents of the proposal for temporary waiver of certain provisions of TRIPS agreement for prevention and treatment of COVID-19 to submit the revised document “as soon as possible” so that text-based negotiations can begin.
- Welcoming the statement of U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai on the issue, the Director General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has said she “warmly” welcomes Tai’s willingness to engage with proponents of a temporary waiver of the

TRIPS agreement to help in combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The proposed relaxations in the norms of the agreement are aimed at ensuring quick and affordable access to vaccines and medicines for developing countries.
- The agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights or TRIPS came into effect in January 1995.
- It is a multilateral agreement on intellectual property (IP) rights such as copyright, industrial designs, patents and protection of undisclosed information or trade secrets.
- The proposal has urged WTO to grant a waiver for limited years (which will be negotiated by the TRIPS Council) from the implementation, application and enforcement of specific provisions of the TRIPS agreement for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19.

WhatsApp defers May 15 deadline on privacy policy

Syllabus -GS 2: Governance

Analysis: -

- Instant messaging platform WhatsApp on Friday said it had for now done away with the May 15 deadline for users to accept its privacy policy and that it would “follow up” with people who had not yet accepted the new terms of service.



- “No accounts will be deleted on May 15 because of this update and no one in India will lose functionality of WhatsApp either.
- We will follow up with reminders to people over the next several weeks,” a spokesperson for the company said in a statement.
- The Facebook-owned company also said that though most WhatsApp users had accepted the terms of the updated privacy policy, some have not had the chance to do so.

Ex-Defence doctors to provide online consultation on e-Sanjeevani OPD

Syllabus -GS 2: Governance

Analysis: -

- Ex-Defence doctors will now provide online consultation on e-Sanjeevani OPD to all citizens of the country.
- Veterans have come forward to answer the call of the nation and offered their services to help the people needing medical care.
- Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar and Director General of Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) Surgeon Vice Admiral Rajat Datta addressed the veterans who have come forward to offer their services, through video conferencing on May 07, 2021.
- The e-Sanjeevani OPD is a flagship telemedicine platform of the Government, developed by the Centre for Development of Advance Computing (C-DAC), Mohali under the aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

- It provides free consultations to Indian citizens and is functioning extremely well.
- However, due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, the demand for doctors is up while the supply has reduced as doctors are being pulled out for COVID ward duties.
- This is where the defence veterans are stepping in to help.

Mains Analysis

Cleared for India, Antibody Cocktail Trump used

Why in News?

An investigational antibody cocktail, has got approval from India’s Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) for use in emergency situations for treatment of Covid-19.

Syllabus-- GS3: Science & Tech

- The drug currently has received Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) in the US, where Trump had taken the drug when he contracted the disease, and the European Union.
- Roche said the approval granted in India was based on the data that have been filed for the EUA in the US, and the scientific opinion of the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) in the European Union.
- The drug will be imported in batches to India & will be market & distributed through a strategic partnership with Cipla limited.

What is the Cocktail?

- It is a cocktail of two antibodies- Casirivimab & Imdevimab that is used for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in high-risk patients.
- High-risk includes patients above 60 & those who have various comorbidities.
- Both antibodies are monoclonal or laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system's ability to fight off harmful pathogens like viruses.
- They are directed against the spike protein of SARS-COV-2, & designed to block the virus's attachment & entry into human cells.

Significance in COVID19 Treatment: -

- Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system's ability to fight off harmful pathogens such as viruses.
- Casirivimab and imdevimab are monoclonal antibodies that are specifically directed

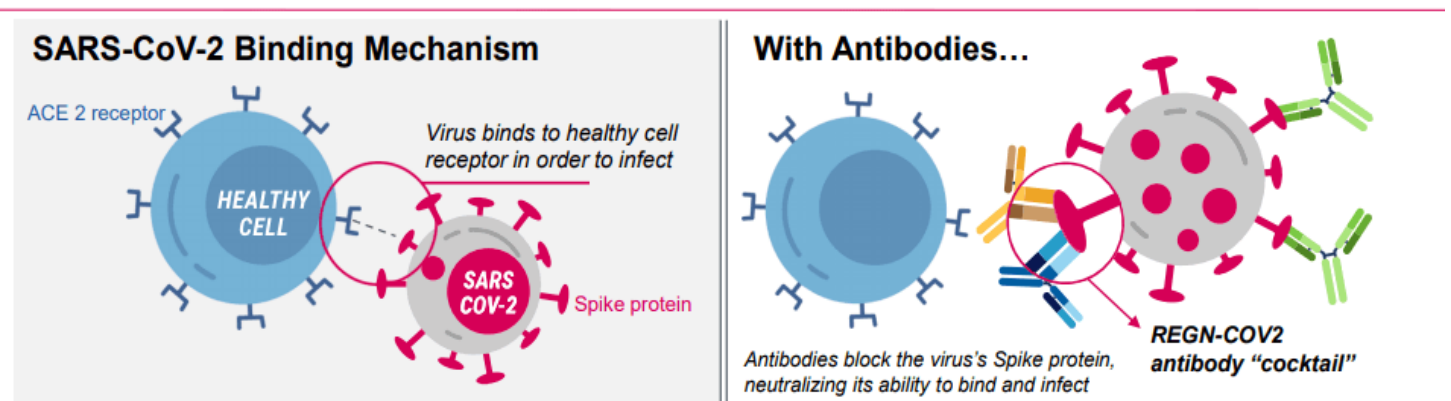
against the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, and designed to block the virus' attachment and entry into human cells.

- The antibody cocktail is to be administered for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid-19 cases in adults and pediatric patients (12 years of age or older, weighing at least 40 kg) who are confirmed to be infected with SARS-COV2, and who are at high risk of developing severe Covid-19 disease.

Who is it for?

- The cocktail is to be administered for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 adults & paediatric patients (12 or older) who are at high risk of developing severe disease.
- It is approved at a combined dose of 1200mg & has to be stored at 2 to 8 degree Celsius.
- Thanks to its specific engineering of two neutralising antibodies which bind to different parts of the virus spike, the

HOW ANTIBODIES WORK AGAINST SARS-COV-2



- **Regeneron takes a "cocktail" approach to diminish risk of viral escape**, which is when a virus is selectively pressured by a single antibody and spontaneously-arising mutant forms of the virus are able to 'escape' or evade the antibody's blocking action. These mutants are then 'selected' and may ultimately become the dominant strain.
- **Multiple antibodies that potently bind to non-competitive locations** require the virus to have multiple simultaneous mutations at multiple genetic sites in order to escape – a highly unlikely scenario.
- **REGN-EB3 for Ebola** is Regeneron's three-antibody cocktail currently under FDA review that was created using the same principles and technologies.

Casirivimab and imdevimab cocktail remains efficacious against widest spread variants and reduces the risk of losing its neutralisation potency against new emerging variants

How effective is it?

- From phase 3 trial data, the cocktail significantly reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by 70% compared to placebo.
- Both antibodies also significantly shortened the duration of symptoms by 4 days.
- Further, due to the specific engineering of two neutralizing antibodies, the cocktail remains efficacious against the widest spread variants & reduces the risk of losing its neutralization potency against new emerging variants.

Question: -

The Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) granted Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) to Roche for the antibody cocktail. Discuss how this partnership with Roche is a significant step in enabling access to promising treatments in furtherance to our purpose of 'Caring for Life'".

The Oxygen Famine

Why in News?

The author talks about how ramping up medical oxygen production, distribution can save lives.

Syllabus-- GS2: Issues related to Health Sector.

Italy's Experience for India: -

- In 2020, at its peak in Italy COVID had claimed around 1.2 lakh lives because of Covid-19 illness & post-complications.
- Whereas in India in 2021, the second wave has been claiming a very high number of lives similar to the Italy case but the fundamental difference is, in India, the reported deaths are due to a lack of basic healthcare facilities mainly medicinal oxygen.
- In Italy, at its peak in 2020, the Covid-19 virus had claimed around 1.21 lakh lives.
- In India, not only is this figure very high during the second wave but there is also a fundamental difference between their deaths and ours. In Italy, people died due to the Covid-19 illness and its complications.
- In the second wave in India, most of the deaths have come about due to a lack of basic healthcare facilities — medicinal oxygen being the most glaring.
- The situation is so bad that the highest court of the country has been deliberating on the matter for the past 10 days but, unfortunately, nothing seems to be happening.

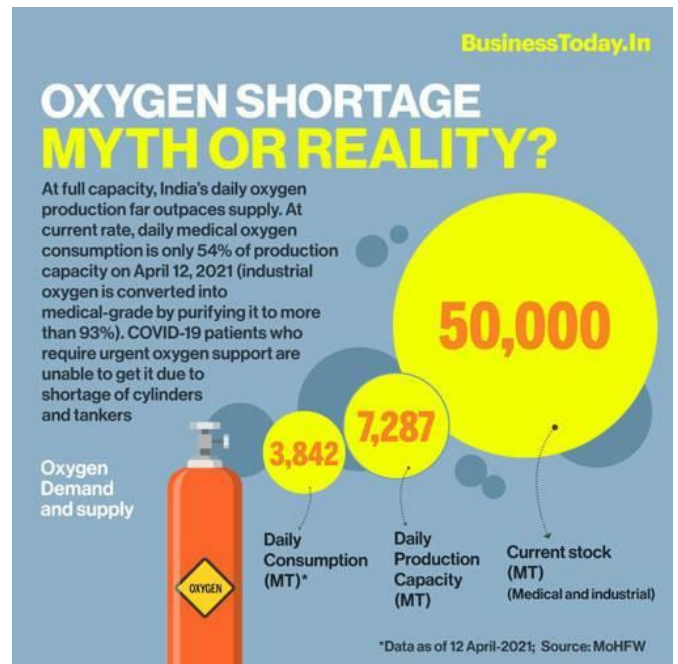
- Frantic messages by hospitals alerting authorities of the lack of oxygen supply have become commonplace.
- Large cities like Delhi, Surat and Lucknow are gasping for air.
- There are reports of Covid patients dying in hospital wards, at home and even on the streets due to a lack of oxygen supply.

What's a “Oxygen Famine”?

- In India, medicinal oxygen is produced by both government-owned and private manufacturers.
- Experts believe that India can produce about 7,000 metric tonnes of medical oxygen per day:
- We have enough capacity to produce medicinal oxygen but we still see hospitals and individuals struggling due to lack of oxygen.
- This is the classical trait of a famine as described by Amartya Sen — enough production but no availability.
- The key, therefore, lies in increasing the production of oxygen to maximum capacity. But manufacturing is not the same as supplying to regions hungry for oxygen.
- Medical oxygen is prepared in a liquid form with around 99.5 per cent purity.
- This is then stored in jumbo tankers and transported to distributors in cryogenic tankers at a specified temperature.
- Once this reaches the distributor, a process of regasification is done to convert it into

gaseous oxygen, which is then filled into cylinders.

- This process is long, requiring three to six days to reach the user because India does not have enough cryogenic tankers to ensure a quicker supply of oxygen.



- This needs to be sorted out by the policymakers if any respite in the current situation is to be expected.
- Arranging cryogenic tankers is thus as vital as more hospital beds or ventilators.
- Large cities like Delhi, Lucknow are gasping for air & deaths are reported in hospitals, homes & on the streets due to lack of oxygen supply.
- The situation is in a very bad state, even with Supreme Court deliberation, nothing concrete is happening.
- Before the 2nd wave, India's medical oxygen requirement was around 700 tonnes per day but at present, the requirement is increased to more than 5000 tonnes per day.

- This put immense pressure on the manufacturing units.
- This unprecedented situation can be compared to a famine.
- The current pandemic is evolving into an “oxygen famine”, similar to famine where the basic problem is lack of food.
- Akin to the famine which can be overcome by increasing food supplies, the mortality in the current pandemic can be reduced by providing oxygen not only to the hospitals but also to patients even at home.

Challenges India facing in this regard:

1. Lack of production of medicinal oxygen on par with the requirement in the current state.
2. Even if manufacturing units able to produce required oxygen, but India faces huge challenges in the distribution network.
3. India lacks enough cryogenic tankers to supply oxygen.
4. The process of degasification & regasification at the current stage taking 6 days that delays oxygen supply.
5. India needs more oxygen concentrators to accommodate more patients.

What has to be done?

- Rather than focusing on long-term strategies like setting up new hospitals etc. in the current situation, the govt needs to focus on immediate reliefs to avoid more deaths, such as home-based oxygen treatment protocols, to be provided with oxygen supply.
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Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India | myGov मेरी सरकार

Centre Take Steps to Boost SUPPLY OF OXYGEN TO THE HOSPITALS

- Supply of Oxygen for industrial purposes is prohibited from 22nd April'21 till further orders
 - Surplus oxygen available as a result of this will facilitate its freeing up for use as medical oxygen
- Prohibition not applicable to 9 Industries such as Ampoules & Vials, Pharmaceutical, Steel Plants, Oxygen Cylinder Manufacturers, Petroleum Refineries, etc.
- Timely measures have been taken in the recent days to ensuring smooth supply of medical oxygen to the affected states

- The govt along with private manufactures can able to produce 7000 metric tonnes of medical oxygen per day, this option has to be explored.
- Govt needs to arrange more & more cryogenic tankers that are vital in oxygen supply.
- The oxygen cylinders supply to patients at home needs to be done on a war footing.
- Oxygen Supply & distribution bottlenecks can be overcome by using existing govt supply lines such as fair price shops.
- By using LPG cylinder distributors, govt can identify patients & supply them oxygen cylinders even in remote areas as well.

Way Forward: -

- The current wave of Covid-19 has opened the veins of the republic and is bleeding us white.

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- If we want to intervene to stop deaths, the government needs to have a multi-pronged approach with science and rationality at the centre of it all.
 - By treating this as an oxygen famine, a significant proportion of the mortality rates can be reduced.
 - The current pandemic has reinforced something which we always knew: The healthcare infrastructure of a country is a reflection of the commitment of its regime to its people.
 - The need of the hour is to stop the deaths by govt, using a multi-pronged approach with science & rationality at the centre of it all. By treating the current situation as oxygen famine, a significant proportion of the mortality rates can be reduced.
 - At the same time, when the situation subsides, govt needs to rebuild a vibrant healthcare ecosystem.

Question: -

What do you mean by Oxygen Famine? Enlist the steps to overcome the oxygen crisis in India.