



DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

LEADING HEALTH, POPULATION AND FAMILY WELFARE STORIES OF THE DAY
Friday 20210723

Covid self-isolation

Covid self-isolation alerts threaten food supplies in UK supermarkets (The Tribune: 20210723)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/coronavirus/covid-self-isolation-alerts-threaten-food-supplies-in-uk-supermarkets-287136>

New figures issued on Thursday revealed that more than 600,000 people were ordered to self-isolate by the National Health Service

Supermarkets in the UK have warned that the rising number of retail workers being forced to self-isolate due to Covid-19 has started to threaten the availability of some products.

New figures issued on Thursday revealed that more than 600,000 people were ordered to self-isolate by the National Health Service (NHS) Covid-19 Test and Trace app in the week to July 15, Xinhua news agency reported.

Businesses complained about worker shortages because staff are self-isolating, saying the situation has threatened to disrupt food and fuel supplies.

Shoppers posted pictures of empty shelves in supermarkets across the country as industry leaders demanded urgent action to stop supplies from being hit further.

Meanwhile, emergency services, public transport and postal deliveries have all been hit by staff shortages in recent days, according to local media reports.

On Thursday, the British Retail Consortium called for staff in stores and suppliers to be allowed to work even if they get an alert to self-isolate, provided they are double vaccinated or can show a negative Covid test.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologised to businesses for the disruption, but he insisted the test-and-trace app is a vital tool in the battle against the virus.

The public has been urged not to panic buy.

The UK's Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said: "I don't want people to get the impression that every shelf in every supermarket is bare - that is not the case but we are certainly concerned about instances of shortages, we are looking at the supply chains of critical industries and we are reviewing that situation." According to the government guideline, isolation rules will last until August 16.

From that date, people who are fully vaccinated and under-18s will be able to avoid self-isolating by taking daily Covid tests.

England has recently lifted most restrictions as part of the final step of the roadmap out of the lockdown.

But scientists have warned that lifting all restrictions at this stage could increase likelihood of dangerous variants. IANS

Covid

Covid: The reason cases are rising among the double vaccinated – it's not because vaccines aren't working (The Tribune: 20210723)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/coronavirus/covid-the-reason-cases-are-rising-among-the-double-vaccinated-%E2%80%93-its-not-because-vaccines-arent-working-287131>

Covid vaccines are extremely effective, but none 100 per cent so

Covid: The reason cases are rising among the double vaccinated – it's not because vaccines aren't working

There are several factors at play that explain why such a high proportion of cases are in the fully vaccinated.

Sir Patrick Vallance, the UK's chief scientific adviser, has announced that 40 per cent of people admitted to hospital with Covid in the UK have had two doses of a coronavirus vaccine. At first glance, this rings very serious alarm bells, but it shouldn't. The vaccines are still working very well.

There are several factors at play that explain why such a high proportion of cases are in the fully vaccinated.

Covid vaccines are extremely effective, but none 100 per cent so. This itself isn't surprising – flu vaccines aren't 100 per cent effective either.

Yet in the US alone flu vaccines are estimated to prevent millions of cases of illness, tens of thousands of hospitalisations and thousands of deaths every year. The Covid vaccines are doing the same in the UK right now – all one has to do is compare the curves from the winter wave with those from this summer.

As cases are rising, hospitalisations and deaths are rising too, but not at anywhere near the same level as they were in the winter. In the second half of December 2020 – a time when UK case rates were similar to what they are now – about 3,800 people were being admitted to hospital with Covid each day.

The average now is around 700. So though that's still higher than we wish it was, it's a lot lower than it was the last time we had this many infections.

Covid is also growing among the vaccinated because the number of people in the UK who have had both doses is continuing to rise. At the time of writing, 88 per cent of UK adults have had a first dose and 69 per cent a second. As more and more of the population is vaccinated, the relative proportion of those with Covid who have had both jabs will rise.

If you imagine a hypothetical scenario in which 100 per cent of the population is double vaccinated, then 100 per cent of people with Covid, and in hospital with Covid, will also have had both jabs. As with deaths, this doesn't mean the vaccine isn't working. It just means the vaccine rollout is going very well.

We also need to remember that the vaccine rollout in the UK has systematically targeted people at the highest risk from Covid.

Older people and people with health conditions that make them more vulnerable were the first to get vaccinated. Once vaccinated, these people (including me) are at much lower risk from Covid than they would have been otherwise – but they are still at risk.

That means that when we compare people with both vaccinations being hospitalised to those who haven't had both doses, we aren't comparing like with like. People with both vaccinations are more likely to have been at greater risk from COVID in the first place. This makes them both more likely to be hospitalised and more likely to have already received both of their vaccine doses.

Is Covid different in the vaccinated?

The latest data from Public Health England suggests that against the delta variant, which is now dominant in UK, two doses of any of the vaccines available in Britain are estimated to offer 79 per cent protection against symptomatic Covid and 96 per cent protection against hospitalisation.

We don't have clear estimates yet from Public Health England on the level of protection against death caused by the delta variant – fortunately, this is partly driven by the fact deaths have been relatively low during this third wave in the UK.

But for the alpha variant, Public Health England data estimates the Pfizer vaccine to be between 95 per cent and 99 per cent effective at preventing death from Covid-19, with the AstraZeneca vaccine estimated to be between 75 per cent and 99 per cent effective. The evidence we have so far doesn't suggest that the delta variant substantially changes this picture.

There's lots we still need to learn about how people with both vaccine doses respond to getting infected with the virus. The UK's Covid Symptom Study is looking at this.

One of the key questions that remain is who is at most risk. Emerging data – released in a preprint, so yet to be reviewed by other scientists – suggests people who are overweight or obese, poorer people, and people with health conditions causing frailty seem to be more likely to get infected after having both jabs.

The preprint also suggests that age itself doesn't seem to affect chances of developing Covid after being vaccinated, nor does having a long-term condition such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease – but we need more data on this to be sure of these findings.

Generally, the Covid Symptom Study has found that people report the same Covid symptoms whether or not they've been vaccinated, but that people who've been vaccinated have fewer symptoms over a shorter period of time, suggesting less serious illness. The most commonly reported symptoms in people who had had both doses were headache, runny nose, sneezing, sore throat and loss of smell. (The Conversation)

India's vaccination drive (Hindustan Times: 20210723)

<https://epaper.hindustantimes.com/Home/ArticleView>

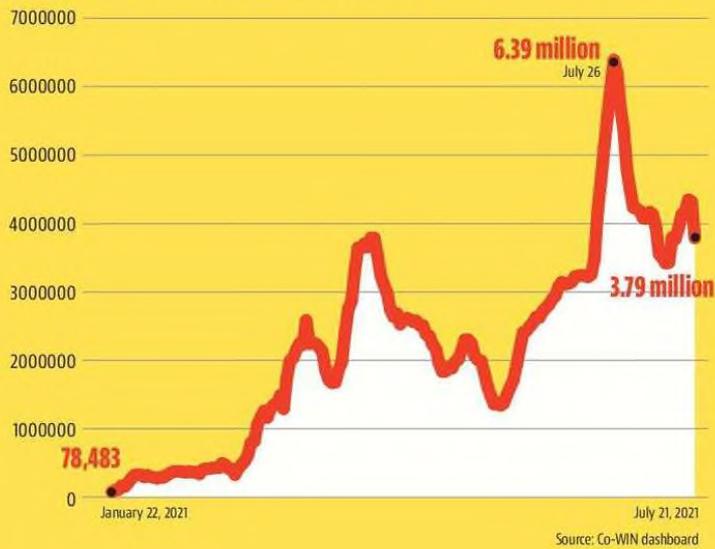
Six months into India's vaccination drive: What is right and what is notBy Abhishek

JhaIndia launched its Covid-19 vaccination drive on January 16. Six months into it, there has been visible improvement on most fronts: the pace has picked up, and the gender and urban-rural gaps are reducing. Still, more needs to be done if India wants to achieve its stated target of vaccinating its entire adult population of 940 million by the end of 2021.

1 Daily jabs are off their peak, but still higher than before

India's vaccine supply policy has gone through several phases. In the first three, vaccinations were opened up to healthcare workers, front-line workers, and those over the age of 60 years or over the age of 45 years but with co-morbidities. In all three, the vaccines were sourced and supplied by the Union government – to the states and to private centres. Starting April 1, vaccinations were opened up to those over the age of 45. In this phase too, vaccines were procured and allocated to states and private centres by the Union government. Starting May 1, India opened up vaccinations for everyone over the age of 18. This happened even as supplies remained constrained. States were allowed to procure up to 25% of the vaccines made locally for this; private hospitals were allowed to buy another 25%; and the remaining 50% was sourced by the Union government for distribution to the states for healthcare and frontline workers and those over the age of 45 years. After a messy month-and-a-half when supplies played truant, and demand soared, the Union government took over the sourcing of 75% of the vaccines starting June 21 (the private sector continued to procure and administer 25%). The seven-day average of new doses administered reached an all-time high of 6.39 million on June 26, a number that India could never hope to

Seven-day average of daily new doses administered

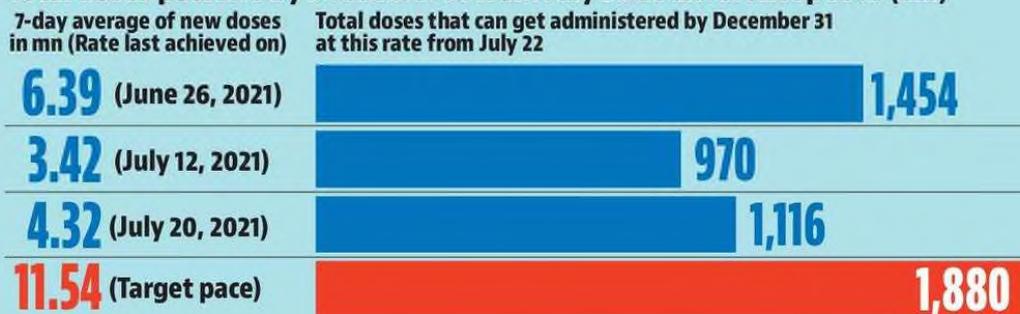


sustain because it translates into a supply of 191.7 million a month (and in July, according to the health ministry, the supply is expected to be 135 million doses). The numbers fell subsequently, reaching just 3.42 million on July 12. However, in the past week, the pace of vaccinations has increased again. While it is still short of the peak of 6.39 million, it is significantly higher than what it was before.

2 But the current pace of vaccine administration needs to increase to meet the December 31 deadline

The Union government has set a target of vaccinating India's entire adult population by December 31. As of 6pm on July 22, 87.8 million people have been fully vaccinated and 242.2 million people have received at least one dose. India's adult population, as on March 1, according to a projection by the National Commission on Population is 940 million. This means that 65% of the adult population has not received even one dose of vaccines until now. As the share of people who have been given their first dose of vaccine increases, future vaccine supplies will have to be reserved for administering second doses. Even if the current rate of administering first doses to 4.32 million people (as on July 20) daily is maintained, the target of vaccinating the entire population by December 31 will not be met. However, supplies are expected to increase significantly starting August, making it possible for India to accelerate its drive.

Total doses possible by December 31 from July 22 at different speeds (mn)



Source: Co-WIN dashboard

3 Vaccination in rural districts is increasing

Urban India had a head-start in terms of vaccinations. While this is to be expected, it is self-defeating. An HT analysis based on merging the 754 districts listed on the Co-Win app with the 640 districts in the 2011 census shows that almost three-fourth (72.8%) of India's population lived in rural districts with at least 60% of the population living in rural areas. On July 21, the seven-day average of new doses administered per million population in rural districts was 2,799. This number was 4,477 for the urban districts where the share of rural population was less than 40%. To be sure, things have improved on this front. The ratio of seven-day average of new doses per million in urban and rural districts was 2.76 on June 6, against 1.60 on July 21.

Ratio of 7-day avg of new doses per million population



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Children's behaviour during pandemic

Adults must keep a watch on children's behaviour during pandemic, says expert (The Hindu: 20210723)

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/adults-must-keep-a-watch-on-childrens-behaviour-during-pandemic-says-expert/article35460858.ece>

Factors can affect mental well-being of children, he says

Rajesh Sagar, Professor, Department of Psychiatry, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, and Member, Central Mental Health Authority, speaks exclusively to The Hindu on the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of children an

Covid Lingers (The Asian Age: 20210723)

<http://onlinepaper.asianage.com/articledetailpage.aspx?id=15725750>

THE ASIAN AGE

23 JULY 2021

Let the Games begin in Tokyo as Covid lingers

The modern Olympic Games, held in three different centuries, were disrupted only by the World Wars while surviving global economic and political strife and sporting boycotts. No edition since 1896 may have been so fraught with the sheer tensions of a global pandemic. Organisers are still struggling to assure the citizens of Tokyo and Japan that 11,000 athletes from 200 countries, their support staff, officials, administrators and delegates will not worsen the spread of Covid-19 by holding the 2020 Olympic Games after a year's postponement. Athletes as well as teams are being sidelined with the virus catching in its net close to 100 people associated with the Games even as the caseload in Tokyo has been rising with new infections.

Protests in Japan are not only regarding the Games becoming a super-spreader. They have sprouted in the arena as well with athletes taking the knee in a gesture that has been spreading globally after the killing of George Floyd 14 months ago in the United States. The right of expression has been granted to athletes to make

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their symbolic gestures of protest as Rule 50 of the IOC charter that banned "demonstration of political, religious or racial propaganda" has been watered down. Protests are also expected to crop up Friday at the Opening Ceremony, which many of the athletes would be avoiding for fear of contracting the infection and so losing their one sporting opportunity in five years for an Olympic medal.

There is no knowing which athletes or teams will be hit by the march of the pandemic in the next fortnight in Japan where a national emergency has been declared. No athlete in the Games can say he/she was not affected psychologically by the events since the lockdowns began worldwide

around March 2020. Tokyo's excellent sporting infrastructure will, however, be offering a level playing field for all of them. There can be no excuses on medical grounds and all athletes will also have to make do with a distinct lack of atmosphere in the absence of spectators on-site. That would mean a further loss of \$1.20 billion for the organisers who have had to go ahead with the Games or risk losing all \$30 billion that has been ploughed into hosting the Games.

Indian athletes will be facing the additional burden of expectations which their vast national following bestows on them. The chances of Indian athletes may have been hyped up in typically high aspirations. Hopes must, however, be tempered by the fact that only one Indian athlete, ace shooter Abhinav Bindra, has won a gold medal (in Beijing in 2008) outside of field hockey. A haul of two silvers and four bronzes in London in 2012 was India's biggest in history while the Games in Rio in 2016 were a disappointment but for P.V. Sindhu and Sakshi Malik winning silver medals. The shuttler will be India's best bet for a gold.

If there are many athletes in India's contingent who could strike medals this time may be owed to more scientific preparation over the years besides opportunities to train abroad in recent months with Tokyo in mind and despite the pandemic. There was a time when participation in the Olympics itself was considered an honour for Indians. Not anymore — India expects its athletes to perform and win medals.

