

Q In order to rebuild the devastating effects of pandemic, India needs to prioritise universal vaccination. Discuss (200 words)

A: The 2nd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe loss of life and economic prosperity of citizens. The development of vaccines has been a positive step towards combating the loss of life and livelihood from the pandemic. Universal vaccination is a step to minimise loss of life while allowing for economic recovery.

The challenges to universal vaccination are many:

- ① Cost of procurement - The cost of vaccination is significant for state governments and those in the 18-45 age group for whom vaccines are not free.
- ② Availability - The no. of vaccines available are far less than those required for universal vaccination.
- ③ Rural penetration - Limited rural penetration of vaccine centres would make it difficult to ensure universal vaccines.

Additionally, factors such as vaccine hesitancy, social superstitions & misinformation are impeding universal vaccination.

Solutions to further universal vaccination can be

- ① Attractive pricing and availability - ensuring adequate slots of vaccinations at COVID portal at minimal prices to increase affordability.
- ② Local leaders - Encouraging local leadership to lead campaigns regarding vaccination.

③ Increased awareness — Awareness programs to minimise misinformation and vaccine hesitancy

Universal vaccination is a need of the hour. It will help save lives, ease the burden on the public health infrastructure and open the economy as well. Ensuring health of citizens is a constitutional mandate of the state and universal vaccination is part of the mandate.