



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper II

- Don't discriminate in vaccination: SC
- Image can't be better than reality
- PM reviews usage of Gaseous Oxygen for Medical Purposes
- Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) Oxygen



Don't discriminate in vaccination: SC

Highlights:

1. The Supreme Court said that vaccinations being provided to citizens constitute a valuable public good, and there should be no discrimination in the process.
2. Discrimination cannot be made between different classes of citizens who are similarly circumstanced on the ground that while the Central government will carry the burden of providing free vaccines for the 45 years and above population, the State governments will discharge the responsibility of the 18 to 44 age group on such commercial terms as they may negotiate.
3. Prima facie, the rational method of proceeding in a manner consistent with the right to life (which includes the right to health) under Article 21 would be for the Central government to procure all vaccines and to negotiate the price with vaccine manufacturers.
4. Once quantities are allocated by it to each State government, the latter would lift the allocated quantities and carry out the distribution the court directed.
5. There must be an effective policy to ensure that the nation truly acknowledges frontline worker's effort and creates incentives for them. We hope it will be remedied soon by the Central and State governments through the introduction of appropriate guidelines and measures.

Image can't be better than reality

Reporting: The website of UNESCO on World Press Freedom Day points out how this day is an important symbol of support for media who are targets for the restraint, or abolition, of press freedom. One of the key acts on this day is to remember and honour journalists who lost their lives to bring us stories. If journalism has to thrive as a public good, then it is important that journalists are alive to do their job.

Media is important for economic development

1. It is well to remember that freedom through the press is the thing that comes first. Most of us probably feel we couldn't be free without newspapers, and that is the real reason we want the newspapers to be free.



2. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and altered our lives in more ways than one, we are reminded of Amartya Sen's words. In his essay, 'Speaking of freedom: Why media is important for economic development, he dealt with how a set of interrelated components of press freedom — its intrinsic value, its informational role, its protective role and its constructive contributions — become a bedrock for equitable development.
3. Journalists are the unacknowledged and unsung messengers who have been bringing to light the reprehensible disintegration of basic healthcare facilities in the midst of a pandemic, often reporting from the field, standing outside hospitals, morgues and cremation grounds alongside scores of desperate patients and relatives.
4. While this seems to be a simple truth to realise, one is truly at a loss to understand why governments — both at the Centre and in States — are not extending all the facilities provided to frontline workers to these professionals.

'One-sided narrative'

1. Instead of providing the necessary infrastructural support, the government of India is busy attacking international media. Major news outlets such as The New York Times, The Guardian, Le Monde and The Straits Times, and most TV channels, blamed the Modi government for ignoring warning signs, holding an extended election in West Bengal, and not cancelling the Kumbh Mela.
2. Irked by the truth of these reports, instead of improving the delivery systems, the government wanted all its diplomatic stations to counter the "one-sided narrative".
3. It is a law of optics that an image cannot be better than reality. Best concentrate on dealing with the crisis. The world has a stake in our success. The image will follow deeds and success.



PM reviews usage of Gaseous Oxygen for Medical Purposes

In line with his direction of exploring innovative ways to ramp up the supply and availability of oxygen, PM Modi today chaired a meeting to review the usage of gaseous oxygen.

Gaseous oxygen:

1. Many industries like Steel plants, refineries with petrochemical units, industries using rich combustion process, power plants etc have oxygen plants which produce gaseous oxygen which is used in the process. This oxygen can be tapped for medical use.
2. The central government also said it will begin using nitrogen plants for producing oxygen and has identified 30 industries for this. UPL Ltd has converted one to supply medical oxygen to a hospital in Gujarat.
3. The strategy being used is to identify industrial units which produce gaseous oxygen of requisite purity, shortlist those which are closer to cities/dense areas/demand centres and establish temporary Covid care centres with oxygenated beds near that source.
4. A pilot for 5 such facilities had already been initiated and there is good progress on this. This is being accomplished through PSUs or private industries operating the plant & coordination of centre & state governments.
5. It is expected that around 10,000 oxygenated beds can be made available in a short period of time by making temporary hospitals near such plants.

Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) Oxygen

PM reviewed progress on setting up of PSA plants. He was informed that around 1500 PSA plants are in the process of being set up through the contribution of PM CARES, PSUs and others. He directed officials to ensure the speedy completion of these plants.

The technology

1. Adsorption is defined as the affinity of fluid for a solid surface. Using the differential affinities of various components of a gas mixture (such as air) it is



possible to separate the various components. That, essentially, is the principle used by a PSA oxygen plant.

2. Such a plant can come in varying capacities to generate oxygen. It employs a technology that absorbs nitrogen from ambient air to concentrate oxygen for supply to hospitals or the industry, as the case may be.
3. They operate at near-ambient temperatures and use specific adsorbent materials like zeolites, activated carbon, molecular sieves etc., to trap oxygen at high pressure.
4. The oxygen thus generated can be supplied straight to the site of use either through a dedicated pipeline or compressed to fill cylinders.
5. While the oxygen produced by these plants is believed to be less pure than liquid oxygen derived from cryogenic technology, the outrage in the country currently centres around the debate about whether these plants could have helped ease the ongoing medical oxygen crisis.
6. Medical grade oxygen has an oxygen concentration between 90.0 per cent and 96 per cent. The remainder is principally argon and nitrogen.

Advantages of PSA plant

1. There are two obvious advantages of the technology — the first is that the hospital gets a captive plant that can generate all the oxygen it needs, doing away with the need for cylinders etc. As the home ministry said Monday, India's problem is not oxygen generation but oxygen transportation.
2. Handling cylinders also has a safety aspect to it as oxygen under high pressure is highly inflammable. Several fires in Covid-19 hospitals across the country in the last few days have been grim reminders of those risks.
3. The plant can also give it some buffer during times of augmented demand. It is not an expensive technology.
4. But what works very well for hospitals also is the fact that PSA is 'clean technology'. The raw material that it uses is the ambient air. It also takes very limited space; the maximum area occupied by a PSA oxygen plant is about 7 ft/9ft/7ft.
5. It takes just a few weeks to get a plant up and running and there are at least 25 vendors in the country who can supply between 2-20 plants per month.