

India coronavirus: What is the gov't's change to vaccine policy?

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that adults in India will not get free vaccines. "It has been decided that from 12 June, all adults over the age of 18 will be vaccinated [for free]," he said.

"Whether it is the poor, the lower middle class, the middle class, or the upper middle class, under the central government program, everyone will get free vaccines," he said.

But what does this mean for vaccination strategy in India, which has struggled with a severe second wave of coronavirus? Prime Minister Modi's announcement came in a round of news on TV, in which he talked about the history and logistics of vaccine programs in India.

Responsibility for vaccinations in India has historically been shared between the federal government in Delhi and state governments.

Under the earlier Covid vaccine policy, half of all vaccine doses in India went to the federal government, and the rest went to state administrations and private hospitals.

The new federal government will buy 75% of all vaccine doses. The state governments will receive their vaccine doses for free from the federal government, instead of negotiating directly with manufacturers.

However, it's worth noting that the remaining 25% of vaccine doses will not be made for government or private hospitals. These vaccines are not for people, but to pay in private hospitals.

The federal government has had prices for the three approved vaccines at 780 rupees (\$10.7) for Covishield, 1,045 rupees (\$13.7) for Sputnik V, and 1,410 rupees (\$18.3) for Covaxin.

It means that state governments will now receive their allocated vaccine doses from the federal government based on the population of those states, the total state vaccination program and vaccine wastage.

That reduces the state administration's role in procuring doses from the manufacturer at higher prices than were offered by the federal government.

The announcement also comes just days after the previous policy announced criticism from industry groups, which called it "unhealthy and unhelpful."

It questioned the rationale behind making states pay more for vaccines than the federal government had to.

States had to procure them on the open market, and as the financial burden on some of the poorest



states such as Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh significantly increased.

"This is a step in the right direction and will streamline some procurement-related challenges," says policy analyst and systems expert Dr. Chandan Lalwaria.

Who does this mean for ordinary people? The new policy is in fact intended to be a relief for the states.

This was even acknowledged by Mr. Modi himself, who said "the old system, in place before 1 May, will be implemented again."

The original policy was changed in April, when India was hit by a dramatic surge in case numbers and India's vaccine drive was faltering.

States were then allowed to buy vaccines directly from manufacturers, which it was hoped

would encourage other vaccine makers to enter the Indian market and boost supply.

But that did not work out like that, and shortages of vaccines began to emerge in early April, with 160 million doses administered on 10 April, the highest so far.

But that figure fell by more than half in mid-May, and the 18-44 age group, due to shortages.

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Tajikistan nets hundreds of millions from donors to build roads

One billboard detail around Dushanbe is a reminder that the government claims is a key priority: "Roads Drive Hearts Closer," it reads.

That notwithstanding, a large and expensive road project being funded by expatriate workers is flooding one of the country's most important highways.

And the government is relying on foreign donors to pay for and build it.

The road from the capital, Dushanbe, to President Rahmon's home district, Dughlaba, is by and large privately owned, while most of the drive eastward from there to the Pamir is along dusty, rough-surfaced and rutted roads.

A 30-kilometer stretch replacing the part of the M41 highway being considered as a result of the construction of the Rughla hydro-power dam is being funded by part with \$110 million grant from the Asian Development Bank, another \$40 million from the International Development Bank, and the rest from the OPIC Fund for International Development.

The Tajik government will spend \$2.8 billion of its own money. What is the plan for completion to later this November 2021?

The road is part of important international corridors, which also providing critical access to economic opportunities and social services for local communities.

While foreigners pay, Tajik citizens reap the benefits. The Tajik government has picked up the bill for the road, but it has been spent on executing the project in an expeditious manner.

As the Pamir becomes a hub for the road, Dushanbe is seeing a large influx of cash from China for the construction of the road from Kabul to Dushanbe.

Regional estimates of how much Beijing might spend in Tajikistan are not very far from \$150 million to \$200 million.

And it is not yet known what China will expect in return.

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Beijing, according to counter-terror experts, has done strong commitment not to allow its territory to be used by terrorists. The Bangladesh's security agencies have kept a close eye on any terrorist element among the massive influx of the Rohingya from Myanmar's Rakhine State.

The Bangladesh PM on her part made reciprocal arrangements for the Rohingya refugees including creating facilities for them at a 100-acre site in Bangladesh.

Beijing has positioned the ruling Awami League as a secular nationalist party and the government's main focus had been on a "zero-tolerance" strategy on terrorism. In support of counter-terrorism, the Bangladesh government also enacted the country's first anti-terrorism law in 2009, which, in spite of some criticism, the government also formalized the Ministry of Law Enforcement Act, 2012.

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Is Uzbekistan a safe place to invest?

Uzbekistan joined Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit that was held in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province last week. Against the backdrop of the transformation of the world's economic landscape triggered by the rise of Asia as a new development hub, the SCO has provided a reliable platform for the region to become one of the world's economic development centers.

Uzbekistan's economic growth has been rapid in recent years, and it is expected to increase its GDP by 2.5 times. However, Uzbekistan's GDP is still low, around 441 billion USD.

But Chinese media seems to be so confident in their opinion about Uzbekistan's great progress as an economic development center and an investment attractive region.

One of the leading media in the region, if.org, noted that some of the country's energy investment projects have focused energy investment from all over the world to invest in large investments [if money is their annual reports, because they have no return. Uzbekistan's state-owned oil and gas company 'Uzbekneftgaz' used China Petroleum to invest \$250 million in services for and equipment supply costs in 2019. Uzbekistan's current Minister of Energy and Renewable Resources of the country's board of directors, Akbar Abdullayev, revealed the debt and responded by asking the latter to prove the existence of the debt in court as the South Korean investors - Samsung and Lotte - were worth \$300 million. This sum may turn into a loss for the two companies. In the second quarter of 2020, the Russian Lukoil Corp-

poration confirmed a loss of 39 billion rubles in the impairment of assets in the field of foreign exploration and exploitation. The loss mainly came from its branch in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekneftgaz, indeed, has made financial problems appear on the subject regularly appear in the local media. For example, at the beginning of the year, the company reported that in 2020 its monthly General Vladimir Novos, said it is a painful season of the SCO Forum on Wednesday - vice Chairman.

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Bangladesh's economic & counter-terror achievements shape UN victory

Bangladesh, which till 1971 was part of undivided Pakistan, today stands in contrast vis-a-vis Pakistan whose track record in promoting cross-border terror and harboring international terrorism is now well-known.

Bangladesh, according to counter-terror experts, has done strong commitment not to allow its territory to be used by terrorists. The Bangladesh's security agencies have kept a close eye on any terrorist element among the massive influx of the Rohingya from Myanmar's Rakhine State.

The Bangladesh PM on her part made reciprocal arrangements for the Rohingya refugees including creating facilities for them at a 100-acre site in Bangladesh.

Beijing has positioned the ruling Awami League as a secular nationalist party and the government's main focus had been on a "zero-tolerance" strategy on terrorism. In support of counter-terrorism, the Bangladesh government also enacted the country's first anti-terrorism law in 2009, which, in spite of some criticism, the government also formalized the Ministry of Law Enforcement Act, 2012.

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