Did India really lag behind vaccinating against critical diseases as claimed by PM Modi?

On June 7, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India had to wait for decades before it could procure vaccines for smallpox, hepatitis B or Polio. "When vaccination programmes ended in other countries, it wouldn't have even begun in our country," PM Modi said.

India Today TV spoke to numerous experts to understand whether India's vaccination drive has picked up post 2014 with Mission Indradhanush, a programme launched by the BJP-led government in December 2014 to strengthen and re-energize the programme and achieve full immunisation coverage for all children and pregnant women at a rapid pace.

India Today TV also analysed a paper published by the Indian Council of Medical Research to understand India's history of immunisation.

"While I'm not aware of any data supporting PM's claim of vaccination improving dramatically between 2014 and now, it is true that India introduced new vaccines in its vaccination programme often with long delays. This was not for lack of but despite India's remarkable vaccine production capabilities." Oommen Kurian, senior fellow, health initiative, Observer Research Foundation told India Today TV.

The Prime Minister said that after 2014, the percentage of children covered under vaccination increased from from 60 per cent to 90 per cent. The last National Family health survey does not reflect this. The National Family Health Survey, 5, the report for 2019-2020, contains data for only 22 states and union territories. Of these, only 17 have been successful in achieving more than 70% vaccination coverage.

A report from Gavi Meeting of the strategic advisory group of experts on immunisation lists India, along with 15 other countries that had reached 80 per cent to 89 per cent coverage in 2014. This is for "Routine immunisation coverage in Gavi countries." This was before mission Indradhanush and Intensified Mission Indradhanush — the immunisation programmes of the BJP-led government.

Experts say that while before the universal immunisation programme in 1985, India's drive can be criticised for being sluggish, but things changed 40 years ago.

Professor Giridhara Babu, while speaking to India Today TV said he agrees with the Prime Minister that before the Universal Immunisation programme that started in 1985, India had to rely on UNICEF and other agencies for vaccines. "However, with the UIP and several other supplementary programmes, India developed the capacity to manufacture several vaccines, including being self-reliant on some vaccines. Some of this were obtained in the country even before Covid-19." he said.

"Starting 2008, India's vaccination programme has increased by leaps and bounds. Some important research on vaccines happened during this time. In 2011, India eradicated polio. Between 2008 and 2013, a number of institutional mechanisms were created," says professor Chandrakant Lahariya, author of Till We Win, and well known epidemiologist.

Professor Chandrakant Lahariya, however, added that even before starting of the universal immunisation programme, 'India had evolved in its efforts'.

Lahariya, in his paper, History of vaccines & vaccination in India says that India, "The science of vaccine evolved across the globe in late 19th century and India was amongst a few countries to have been involved in these efforts. The cholera and typhoid vaccine trials and research and discovery of plague vaccine took place in the country. Vaccine institutes were set up in early and whole of twentieth century.

Rise of Bangladesh is positive for South Asia

About two weeks ago, Bangladesh's central bank approved, in principle, a US$200 million currency swap deal for Sri Lanka, intended to bolster the latter's dwindling foreign exchange reserves. This has evoked more than a little surprise, given the overall development levels of the two countries: Sri Lanka's income per person is twice that of Bangladesh (in terms of current US dollars), and the global perceptions of Bangladesh are not always flattering. How did it come to this? The proximate cause of Sri Lanka's plight is government borrowing, especially from foreign sources. When its civil war ended in 2009, Sri Lanka enjoyed a peace dividend. Its economic growth accelerated from 3.5 per cent in 2009 to 8; 8.4 and 9.1 per cent over the next three years. However, this growth was driven by unsustainable increases in government spending, with the rolling out of mega infrastructure projects, largely financed by the public sector. One example is the economically unviable Hambantota Port. In recent years, Sri Lanka's growth has plummeted, from 5 per cent in 2015 to 2.3 per cent in 2019, the pre-Covid year, and to an estimated -3.6 per cent in 2020. External debt as a share of gross national income grew from 39 per cent in 2010 to 55 per cent in 2014, and further to 69 per cent in 2019. Most of this increase originated in the public sector. The Spring 2021 World Bank economic update shows Sri Lanka facing a high risk of debt sustainability, and rating agencies have downgraded its long-term debt rating. However, a big part of the crisis owes to Sri Lanka's trade regime and the resulting trade outcomes. In 1977, Sri Lanka became the first country in South Asia to start liberalising its protectionist trade stance; it reaped handsome dividends in the form of a rising share of exports and trade in its economy. Unfortunately, this course was reversed in the early 2000s, with the introduction and increasing importance of non-transparent "para-tariffs": tariffs that have different nomenclatures such as cess, ports and airport levy, etc., but that are import duties in all but name. If such para-tariffs are included in the calculation of overall tariffs, as they should be, Sri Lanka's reported average tariffs (2016 data) shoot up from 10.8 per cent to 22.4 per cent.

The starkest evidence of the anti-export bias can be seen in the share of Sri Lanka's trade and exports in its overall economy. Its trade to GDP ratio peaked at 89 per cent in 2000, but then saw an unprecedented decline to 46 per cent by 2010; it was 52 per cent in 2019. Similarly, exports as a share of GDP declined from 39 per cent in 2010 to less than 20 per cent in 2010; they rose somewhat to 23 per cent by 2019. But the overall decline in exports and imports since 2000 is possibly without precedent in a small, modern economy.

BANGLADESH'S GOLDEN GOOSE: Contrast this with Bangladesh. Famously dubbed as a "basket case" by Henry Kissinger at the time of its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has been a remarkable case of sustained and rising growth. One reason for this is its sound macroeconomic management, arguably the best in South Asia. Despite very low tax revenue (a trait that it shares with Sri Lanka and most other South Asian countries), Bangladesh has been careful to not run large government deficits or take up projects that do not have a high economic and social rate of return. Its external debt as a share of GDP has fallen from a peak of 44 per cent in 1994 to 16-18 per cent over 2016-19.

Tajikistan accused of helping China in campaign against Uyghurs

Lawyers for Uyghur groups have given new evidence to the International Criminal Court (ICC) that allegedly shows the Tajik government is cooperating with Beijing to send Uyghurs to China, where they face detention and often much worse.

Tajikistan is not the only country targeted in the complaint submitted to the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor. Cambodia is reported to be another country that allegedly succumbed to Chinese pressure to detain and illegally extradite Uyghurs.

Numerous reports have claimed that the Chinese authorities have put more than 1 million Uyghurs and thousands of other mostly Muslim indigenous minorities in so-called reeducation camps, located mainly in the Uyghurs' traditional homeland in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in western China.

The Chinese say the camps are for vocational training and deny mistreatment of its occupants, despite testimony of detainees and other evidence suggesting otherwise.

Some rights groups say the involuntary incarceration and other more sinister acts against Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and ethnic Chinese Hui are part of a campaign to eradicate Islam and the cultures of these ethnic minorities from Chinese society.

Tajikistan and Cambodia are included in the official complaint because they are members of the ICC.

China is not an ICC member and so is outside the ICC's jurisdiction. "China is not a signed-up member of the ICC...[and believes it] cannot be investigated for what is happening," says Rodney Dixon, one of the lawyers handling the legal process for the Uyghur groups. "The fact is that we are now in a position where there is a very clear legal pathway to allow for the ICC to commence its investigations."

One of the places this investigation could begin is in Tajikistan.

According to a press release from the East Turkistan Government in Exile, one of the Uyghur groups trying to bring the case before the ICC, "Chinese authorities have committed unlawful acts including arrests, enforced disappearances, abductions, and deportations in Tajikistan, an ICC State Party."

The evidence that legal consul

for the East Turkistan Government in Exile, the East Turkistan National Awakening Movement, and individual Uyghur victims handed to the ICC prosecutor on June 10 purports that "members of the Chinese Public Security Bureau who are present in Tajikistan direct local Tajik police to carry out raids on the areas where Uyghurs live and work." It adds that those Uyghurs who did not have "correct paperwork" were "then deported back into China by Chinese authorities in small groups of up to 10 to avoid international attention."

Green investment receives a boost in Kazakhstan

The COVID-19 pandemic recovery in Central Asia is taking an unexpectedly green turn. Three of the five Central Asian states boast large hydrocarbon resources and, ever since becoming independent from the Soviet Union 30 years ago, have relied primarily on oil and natural gas revenues. But now, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are undertaking green energy and green economy programs that promise to bring significant environmental, economic and social change to Central Asia (Ebrd.com, November 16, 2020; Renews.biz, April 9, 2021). The return of the United States to the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Joseph Biden administration's plans to boost green economic development at home and abroad, as well as the European Green Deal have all inspired oil-producing countries in Eurrasia to channel pandemic recovery initiatives into an environmental agenda.

Green energy projects require significant initial financing that even countries endowed with natural resources do not always possess. Although oil prices have recuperated since the global crash in March–April 2020, their rise was slow amidst plunging demand during the pandemic (Investopedia, January 9). Central Asia's biggest oil economies are now ready to diversify and reduce their dependence on fossil fuel revenues, however. Increased cooperation with the US, combined with the availability of green financing instruments, are likely to bring faster recovery and transform the region's economies over the long term.

In January, the US, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan launched the Central Asia Investment Partnership to promote private-sector growth and strengthen regional cooperation in the aftermath of the pandemic (Kz.usembassy.gov, January 7). The US International Development Finance Corporation and its Kazakhstani counterpart, the Astana International Financial Center (AIFC), committed to raising at least $1 billion over the next five years to advance private sector–led projects that promote sustainable investments protecting nature. Continuing US support for this initiative will be critically important to its success.

Green financing has been a priority for AIFC since its inauguration three years ago. Modeled on the Singapore and Dubai financial centers, AIFC is one of the last legacy projects of Kazakhstan's first president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, before he stepped down from office the following year.

Sri Lanka and IFAD partner to reduce poverty and increase food and nutrition security in the face of climate change

June 15, Rome: The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) together with the Government of Sri Lanka last week signed a financial agreement to launch the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP), IFAD said in a press release.

The project aims to address the impacts of climate change on about 40,000 smallholder families, building their resilience and promoting agriculture commercialization.

Improving rural livelihoods, boosting food security and building climate resilience in the country's dry zone, are key to enabling Sri Lanka to eradicate persistent pockets of poverty across the country. The project development objectives are in line with national priorities – and key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Afghan Advertisements

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR BIDDING

Date: 2021/06/16

To: Arman-e-Mili Daily NEWS PAPER

The Ministry of Public Health, now invites sealed bids from eligible and qualified bidders for:

Procurement Entities	Ministry of public Health, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
Funded By	Italian Agency for development and Cooperation (IADC) - Italian Government
Item Description / Ref No.	**Procurement of 73 Item Medical Equipment for Indira Gandhi Child Hospital** **Contract ID: MOPH/RMCM/1400/ICB/G-01**
Deadline for submission Bids	**July, 27, 2021at 10:00 Hours** (Local Time). The public opening of Bids received will be held immediately after the deadline.
Address for Bid submission	Procurement Directorate Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)| Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Mr. Sayed Ahmed "Rohanie", Mob: (+93) 706667599| Web: www.moph.gov.af Sahmed_555@yahoo.com
Website	Interested bidders may download the complete Bidding Documents from NPA website. www.ageops.net , www.npa.gov.af, https://tenders.ageops.net In case of any problem in downloading, may obtain the same by sending e-mail the Address: **Attention:** Naveed "Nasiry" **Street Address:** Ministry of Public Health, Ahmad Shah Masoud Square, Distracts 10, Kabul City, Afghanistan. Telephone: +93 (0)20 230 24 09 Electronic mail address: nayeed.nasiry@25@gmail.com
Bid Security	**USD 10,000 Ten Thousand only or Equivalent Amount in Other Currencies.**

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Notification

The Invitation for Bids for the **2D-SEISMIC DATA ACQUISITION, PROCESSING, AND INTERPRETATION FOR KUSHIKA ZONE AND TIRPUL BASIN with Invitation No NPA/MOMP/1400/NCS-2763/ICB** project, which was published on **15 June 2021**; is suspended temporarily as per the request of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum of Islamic republic of Afghanistan.

Note: You will receive notifications from the next steps of the project.