

NEED FOR CAUTION: ON RUSSIA'S SPUTNIK V VACCINE

India needs more than one vaccine, but all must come through their long gestation

Russia's candidate vaccine for COVID-19 appears to have found a midwife in India. The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), which is piloting the Sputnik V vaccine, has announced a partnership with the Hyderabad-based Dr. Reddy's Laboratories to conduct a Phase-3 trial, or large multi-location human trials here. Were the candidate vaccine, developed by Russia's Gamaleya, to prove safe and efficacious, the RDIF would supply 100 million doses through its partnership with Dr. Reddy's Laboratories. However, there is no agreement to manufacture the vaccine here unlike the deal between the Pune-based Serum Institute of India and the United Kingdom-based AstraZeneca, for the Oxford University-developed ChAdOx1 vaccine. Sputnik V is being developed as a two-dose vaccine on a human adenovirus vaccine platform. Several vaccines that are in development are also being deployed on similar platforms, and the evidence so far is that none of these has been commercially approved for use in humans though there is an experimental vaccine for Ebola. Results of the Phase-1 and Phase-2 trials of the vaccine, published in The Lancet, suggest that the evidence so far is that it has proven safe and efficacious enough to progress to the next stage of trials. Controversially, Sputnik V has been granted a pre-approval by Russia's regulators even before Phase-3 trials have been completed.

There is immense political pressure globally on regulatory agencies to get a vaccine out at the earliest. Thus, it is incumbent on a company conducting such trials to be particularly vigilant that all good practices and necessary protocols are scrupulously followed. It is well acknowledged that two-thirds of the most common vaccines produced globally are made in India. The Serum Institute has committed to producing 100 million doses of its vaccine for India and other 'Low and Middle Income Countries' at less than \$3 per dose. Reportedly, half of these are for India. All in all, there seems to be a guarantee for only about 150 million doses for India, which given the country's population is minuscule. All of this of course does not account for the vaccines that are being indigenously developed in India: Covaxin, by Bharat Biotech, based on a strain sourced from the Indian Council of Medical Research, and ZyCov-D, the plasmid DNA-vaccine being developed by Zydus Cadilla. In Phase-2 trials now, both are being tested for their ability to produce a satisfactory immune response. India has the capabilities for vaccine manufacture, cold chain storage and distribution to ensure access to citizens — and the world — in reasonable time, but it must not forget that vaccines must go through their inevitably long gestation to ensure that only those that are safe and efficacious make their way to the market.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **Sputnik V vaccine** (noun) – it is a COVID-19 vaccine candidate developed by the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, and registered on 11 August 2020 by the Russian Ministry of Health.
- ❖ **vaccine** (noun) – a biological preparation that improves immunity to a particular disease.
- ❖ **come through** (phrasal verb) – be processed/received (methodically).
- ❖ **gestation** (period) (noun) – development, formation (period).
- ❖ **candidate vaccine or vaccine candidate** (noun) – a “potential” vaccine prepared in the research and development (R&D) centres and it can be used in human clinical trials.
- ❖ **midwife** (noun) – a person who supports someone while creating/developing something. (midwife is generally a woman who is trained to assist women in childbirth).
- ❖ **Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF)** (noun) – Russia's sovereign wealth fund established in 2011 by the Russian government to make investments in leading companies of high-growth sectors of the Russian economy.
- ❖ **pilot** (verb) – test, trial, examine.
- ❖ **phase-3 trial** (noun) – In phase 3 trial, the vaccine is given to thousands of people to confirm its safety – including rare side effects – and effectiveness. These trials involve a control group which is given a placebo.
- ❖ **phase 2 trial** (noun) – In phase 2 trial, the vaccine is given to hundreds of people so scientists can learn more about its safety and correct dosage.
- ❖ **phase 1 trial** (noun) – In phase 1 trial of clinical testing, the vaccine is given to a small group of people to determine whether it is safe and to learn more about the immune response it provokes.
- ❖ **human trial** (noun) – a type of research that studies new tests and treatments and evaluates

- their effects on human health outcomes; clinical trial.
- ❖ **efficacious** (adjective) – effective, successful, powerful.
 - ❖ **efficacy** (noun) – In medicine, the ability of an intervention (for example, a drug or surgery) to produce the desired beneficial effect; effectiveness, efficiency, power.
 - ❖ **Oxford vaccine** (noun) – (ChAdOx1 nCoV-19) or (AZD1222) is a COVID-19 vaccine candidate developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca, UK Ltd.
 - ❖ **adenovirus** (noun) – common cold virus; a group of common viruses that can cause infections of the lung, stomach, intestine, and eyes. symptoms resemble those of the common cold.
 - ❖ **deploy** (verb) – use, utilize, employ.
 - ❖ **immense** (adjective) – huge, extremely large.
 - ❖ **regulatory** (adjective) – governmental, supervisory, organizational, controlling.
 - ❖ **get out** (phrasal verb) – succeed in releasing something.
 - ❖ **incumbent on** (adjective) – necessary, compulsory, required, obligatory.
 - ❖ **vigilant** (adjective) – watchful, careful, alert.
 - ❖ **protocol** (noun) – procedure, convention, rules of conduct.
 - ❖ **scrupulously** (adverb) – religiously, consistently, constantly/regularly.
 - ❖ **acknowledge** (verb) – admit, accept, recognize.
 - ❖ **reportedly** (adverb) – supposedly, seemingly, apparently, allegedly.
 - ❖ **all in all** (phrase) – taking everything into account, all things considered, on the whole.
 - ❖ **given** (preposition) – considering, taking into account, bearing in mind.
 - ❖ **minuscule** (adjective) – very small, insignificant, negligible.
 - ❖ **of course** (phrase) – certainly, definitely, absolutely, by all means.
 - ❖ **account for** (verb) – constitute, comprise, represent.
 - ❖ **indigenously** (adverb) – in an indigenous (originating from native/local) manner, something is produced in a particular region/country.
 - ❖ **strain** (noun) – variety, kind, type.
 - ❖ **plasmid** (noun) – a small, circular piece of DNA that is different from the chromosomal DNA. Plasmids naturally exist in bacterial cells. Often, the genes carried in plasmids provide bacteria with genetic advantages, such as antibiotic resistance.
 - ❖ **plasmid DNA-vaccine** (noun) – It involves the direct introduction into appropriate tissues of a plasmid containing the DNA sequence encoding the antigen(s) against which an immune response is sought, so cells directly produce the antigen, causing a protective immunological response.
 - ❖ **cold chain** (noun) – a temperature-controlled supply chain. It is a kind of supply chain that specializes in the storage, transport, and preservation of cargo that needs to be maintained at a specific temperature or within an acceptable temperature range.
 - ❖ **go through** (phrasal verb) – examine, study, scrutinize something methodically.
 - ❖ **inevitably** (adverb) – unavoidably, certainly, definitely.
 - ❖ **make one's way** (phrase) – proceed to a particular place.

A PUSH FOR REFORM: ON UN REFORMS

The UN must change to reflect the altered geopolitical realities in order to stay relevant

As the United Nations commences the 75th session of the General Assembly, the need for internal reforms to suit the 21st century could not be starker. Volkan Bozkir, the Turkish diplomat and politician who is the incoming president of the UNGA, has voiced concern that the structure of the 15-member Security Council ought to be more democratic and representative. But action has been long overdue on the demand, especially from the so-called Group of 4 (G4) countries — Brazil, Germany, India and Japan — which advocate a permanent seat for all of them. Meanwhile, the veto powers that the UNSC's five permanent members enjoy is an anachronism in this age. This instrument is often wielded as a blunt weapon to shore up their geopolitical interests, regardless of the disastrous consequences for the victims of armed conflict. The push for reform gathered momentum following the unilateral declaration of war by the United States and the United Kingdom, against Iraq, in 2003. The General Assembly's 122nd plenary meeting in 2008 decided to facilitate the reform process through the Inter-Governmental Negotiations framework (IGN) on equitable representation as well as expansion of the UNSC. Though the General Assembly's adoption of a 2015 resolution to allow the IGN on the basis of a framework document

generated some enthusiasm, it was dampened by the U.S., Russia and China being opposed to serious reform of the Council. The G4 bemoaned earlier this year that the IGN process might have outlived its purpose given the absence of a negotiating document which alone could provide a structure to the deliberations. In any case, the exercise has been deferred in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

India's election in June as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, obtaining 184 votes, was a diplomatic triumph, notwithstanding that it was the lone contestant for the Asia-Pacific seat. But in a sign of the difficulties ahead to achieve New Delhi's ultimate objective, reforms to the UN figured no more than as part of a broader vision in the declaration to commemorate the organisation's 75th anniversary. The political and economic architecture of the emerging global order that the allied powers shaped at the end of World War II has been altered since then. The UN remains unreflective of the current trajectory, especially in the strategic and economic arenas. The multilateral framework now faces an unprecedented challenge — to fashion a collective response to humanity's biggest problems, which include global warming and the pandemic. Paradoxically though, the post-war order faces an existential threat to its stability from the revival of nationalism across the globe, with some of the powers that enshrined common principles and rules willing to discard them. All countries must have the voice to influence policy.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **push** (noun) – thrust, drive, campaign.
- ❖ **reflect** (verb) – represent, display, demonstrate, be evidence of.
- ❖ **geopolitical** (adjective) – relating to the study of the geographical factors (a country's position on the earth, size, climate, and natural resources & etc.,) in world politics and inter-state relations.
- ❖ **in order to** (phrase) – with the purpose/aim of.
- ❖ **relevant** (adjective) – appropriate to the present time.
- ❖ **suit** (verb) – meet the requirements of, satisfy the demands, be acceptable.
- ❖ **starker comparative** adjective of **stark** (adjective) – bleak, plain/simple, empty, bare.
- ❖ **diplomat** (noun) – envoy, consul, ambassador.
- ❖ **voice** (verb) – express, make public, announce.
- ❖ **ought to** (modal verb) – must, should.
- ❖ **representative** (adjective) – serve as a symbol of something.
- ❖ **long overdue** (adjective) – late, behind schedule, long-delayed.
- ❖ **so-called** (adjective) – commonly named.
- ❖ **advocate** (verb) – support, promote, champion, espouse.
- ❖ **veto** (noun) – an official right/power to reject a decision/proposal (by a governing body).
- ❖ **anachronism** (noun) – irrelevant/inappropriate thing at a time; something located at a time when it could not have existed or occurred.
- ❖ **age** (noun) – time.
- ❖ **instrument** (noun) – mechanism, apparatus, system (to achieve/attain something).
- ❖ **wield** (verb) – use, put to use, employ, handle.
- ❖ **blunt** (noun) – brutal, harsh, rough; undiplomatic.
- ❖ **shore up** (phrasal verb) – support, assist, prop up.
- ❖ **interest** (noun) – benefit, advantage, concern.
- ❖ **regardless of** (phrase) – irrespective of, without consideration of, notwithstanding, in spite of.
- ❖ **disastrous** (adjective) – terrible/horrible, unfortunate, ill-fated, detrimental.
- ❖ **consequence** (noun) – result, outcome, effect; ramification, repercussion.
- ❖ **armed conflict** (noun) – a conflict in which weapons are used.
- ❖ **momentum** (noun) – strength, energy, force.
- ❖ **unilateral** (adjective) – relating to a method of taking decisions (particularly on international relations) by a state (country) individually without considering other states (countries). In general, it is relating to the decision taken individually without consulting with the others concerned.
- ❖ **plenary** (noun) – assembly, conference, meeting (attended by all participants).
- ❖ **facilitate** (verb) – make easy, make possible; assist, help/aid.
- ❖ **inter-** (prefix) – between.
- ❖ **Inter-Governmental Negotiations Framework** (IGN) (noun) – a group of nation-states working within the United Nations to further reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- ❖ **equitable** (adjective) – fair, impartial.
- ❖ **representation** (noun) – the act of speaking/serving on someone's behalf.
- ❖ **framework document** (noun) – policy document; it sets out a set of procedures or goals, which might be used in negotiation or decision-making to guide a more detailed set of policies, or to guide ongoing maintenance of an organization's policies.

- ❖ **resolution** (noun) – proposal, plan; decision, declaration.
- ❖ **enthusiasm** (noun) – eagerness, warmth, interest.
- ❖ **dampen** (verb) – decrease, diminish/lessen, reduce.
- ❖ **bemoan** (verb) – express regret/sorrow about, complain about, express discontent.
- ❖ **outlive** (verb) – outlast, survive, endure, withstand, live through.
- ❖ **given** (preposition) – considering, taking into account, bearing in mind.
- ❖ **deliberation** (noun) – consideration, thought/thinking, contemplation, discussion.
- ❖ **in any case** (phrase) – whatever happens; moreover.
- ❖ **defer** (verb) – put off, postpone, delay; shelve, suspend.
- ❖ **in view of** (phrase) – in the light of, owing to, considering.
- ❖ **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
- ❖ **diplomatic** (adjective) – (delicate & sensitive) consular, foreign-policy.
- ❖ **triumph** (noun) – victory, win, success.
- ❖ **notwithstanding** (adverb) – nevertheless, nonetheless; in spite of, despite, regardless of.
- ❖ **objective** (noun) – aim, intention, purpose.
- ❖ **commemorate** (verb) – celebrate/honour the memory of someone/something with a ceremony/event; pay tribute to, pay homage to.
- ❖ **architecture** (noun) – structure, formation, composition.
- ❖ **world/global order** (noun) – the arrangement of power and authority that provides the system for the conduct of diplomacy and world politics in relation to the entire world. An international-relations term describing the distribution of power among world powers.
- ❖ **Axis powers** (noun) – a group of countries participated in World War II opposed to the Allies. The three major Axis powers were Germany, Italy, and Japan.
- ❖ **Allied powers** (noun) – a group of countries (also known as the Allies) that consisted of those nations opposed to the Axis Powers during the World War II. The major Allied Powers were Britain, France, Russia, the United States and China.
- ❖ **unreflective** (adjective) – not reflective, not thoughtful.
- ❖ **trajectory** (noun) – approach, direction/course.
- ❖ **arena** (noun) – a place of activity.
- ❖ **multilateral** (adjective) – involving many different countries (in which all WTO member countries are party to the agreement).
- ❖ **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
- ❖ **fashion** (verb) – construct, build, make, create.
- ❖ **collective** (adjective) – combined, united/joint, cooperative (by all people as a group).
- ❖ **humanity** (noun) – humankind, the human race, people.
- ❖ **global warming** (noun) – it is the unusually rapid increase in Earth's average surface temperature over the past century primarily due to the greenhouse gases released as people burn fossil fuels.
- ❖ **paradoxically** (adverb) – contradictorily, inconsistently, incongruously.
- ❖ **existential** (adjective) – relating to existence.
- ❖ **revival** (noun) – improvement, rallying, picking up; comeback.
- ❖ **nationalism** (noun) – it refers to a system (with narrow set of ideas) created by a group of people who believe their nation is superior to all others. It is also a perception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance- called as chauvinism (excessive nationalism).
- ❖ **enshrine** (verb) – to enclose in, preserve, treasure, protect (as valuable).
- ❖ **discard** (verb) – throw out, get rid of, abandon/shrug off.
- ❖ **voice** (noun) – the right to express one's opinion/view.
- ❖ **influence** (verb) – affect, have an effect on, persuade.