

Govt. will revert to centralised procurement of vaccines: Modi

PM also says the Centre will provide vaccines for free to all adults from June 21

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced that India would revert to a system of **centralised procurement of vaccines against COVID-19, with free vaccines to be provided for the 18-44 age group as well and with 25% of procurement kept open for the private sector.** This system will be operationalised by June 21.

Announcing the decision during a televised broadcast to the nation, Mr. Modi said many Chief Ministers had “come forward with a demand for reconsideration of the vaccination strategy and for bringing back the system in place before May 1”.

He announced a cap of ₹150 on the amount private hospitals can charge over the cost of purchase of the vaccine from the manufacturer.

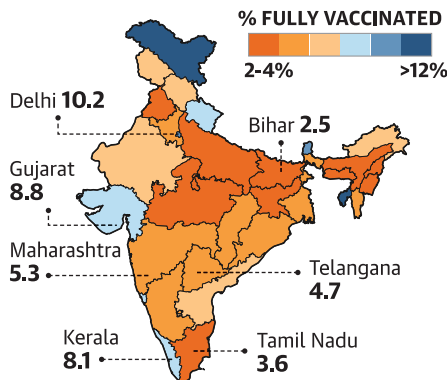
He also announced the **extension of the free ration distribution scheme for 80 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana till Diwali,** in November.

SC hearing on June 30

The Prime Minister’s announcement comes a week after the Supreme Court asked for an affidavit from the **Centre on how the sum**

Long road ahead

Only about 3.3% of the country’s population is fully vaccinated as on June 7. The share of fully vaccinated has crossed the 10% mark in Delhi, while it is less than 4% in T.N.



of ₹35,000 crore allocated in the Union Budget for vaccines has been spent so far.

The Court sought to know why these funds cannot be used for giving free vaccination for those in the age group of 18 to 44 years, observing that the Centre’s policy of not providing free vaccines to this particular age group was prima facie “arbitrary and irrational”. The affidavit is due on June 15 and the next hearing is on June 30.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had written to Chief Ministers across the country urging a consensus on central procurement of vaccines, while Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had written to Chief Ministers of 11 non-NDA States to

unite to ask for free vaccines from the Centre.

Expressing grief at the loss of life especially during the massive second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic that has hit India, Mr. Modi said his government had dealt with the challenges of resources on a war footing to deal with a “once in a century” pandemic.

‘Unprecedented crisis’

“Never in a 100 years has there been such a pandemic, and this saw an unprecedented demand for medical oxygen across the country. We pressed the government, Railways, Army, Air Force, Navy and other wings into service to procure medical oxygen and other medicines required in our fight against

Centre can procure up to 75% of the doses and it will provide them free to States, even for the age group 18-44... In private facilities there will be a cap of ₹150 per dose as service charge over the cost of the vaccine

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



the pandemic,” he said.

At the receiving end of much criticism over vaccine shortages, the Prime Minister defended his government’s record and capacity. “When we were first elected in 2014, we found that vaccine coverage under the universal immunisation programme was around 60% and we quickly launched ‘Mission Indradhanush’ to not only increase coverage but we added other vaccines to improve the health of our children. When COVID-19 hit, our scientists got to work to develop a vaccine to deal with the disease. Government of India set up a vaccine task force in April 2020 itself,” he said.