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US Supports India in Covid-Crisis

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Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India and US President had a telephone conversation with assurances exchanged on smoothening **out issues related to supply chains for vaccines** for **Covid-19**.

- The telephone call came in the **background** of not just flagging supply chain issues with the US with regard to vaccines but also the **lack of certain resources in India to fight the pandemic**, as the country has been hit by exponentially rising cases and deaths.
- Earlier in 2020, **India and the US planned to work together** on vaccine research and testing for Covid-19.

Key Points

- **Bilateral Discussion:**

- India discussed its initiative at the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)** for a relaxation in the norms of the agreement on **Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS)** to ensure quick and affordable access to vaccines and medicines for developing countries.
 - The **1995 agreement on TRIPS** is a key legal instrument that **harmonises Intellectual Property (IP) protection** by imposing binding obligations on member countries to ensure a minimum level of protection and enforcement of IP rights in their territories.
 - IP rights **could hinder the supply of vaccines and drugs at affordable prices.**
- India also mentioned its commitment to contain the Covid-19 pandemic globally through **Vaccine Maitri**, and its participation in **COVAX** and the **Quad Vaccine Initiatives**.
- Both discussed the Covid-19 situation in their respective countries, including India's ongoing efforts to contain the **second wave of Covid-19** through expedited vaccination efforts, and ensuring supply of critical medicines, therapeutics and health care equipment.
- **Recent Developments in the Relations:**
 - India-US ties were **elevated to "comprehensive global strategic partnership"** in 2020.
 - India and the US signed the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA)**, with which the two countries have inked all the all four foundational agreements to bolster defence ties.
 - Among the **many highlights** are deepening government-to-government dialogues, shared vision of the Indo-Pacific, regional cooperation, defence and security ties, and ability to respond to unexpected challenges.

- **India's Request:**

- Emphasized the **need to ensure smooth and open supply chains of raw materials** and inputs required for manufacture of vaccines, medicines, and therapeutics related to Covid-19.
- **Requested for supply of seven essential items** that it needs on an urgent basis. These are **oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders, oxygen generators, oxygen generation plants, remdesivir, favipiravir, and tocilizumab.**

- **US' Steps:**

- It has **diverted its pending orders** of vaccine filters to India's vaccine manufacturers. It will **help India make more vaccines.**
- It has **identified sources of specific raw material** urgently required for Indian manufacture of the **Covishield** vaccine that will immediately be made available for India.

- **Other Countries Helping India:**

- **Singapore** has donated four cryogenic oxygen tanks to India.
- The **United Kingdom** has announced that it will ship over “600 pieces of vital medical equipment” to help India fight Covid19.
- **Australia** has announced that it will send oxygen, ventilators and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits to India as part of an immediate support package.
- **Saudi Arabia** is shipping 80 metric tonnes of liquid oxygen to India.
- **Germany** is preparing a “mission of support” for India.
- **Russia** had also announced that it would send 3,00,000-4,00,000 units of Remdesivir injection. It is also planning to send Covid-19 assistance including oxygen concentrators, generators, and drugs needed to treat the disease.
- **China** has also announced that it would provide support and help based on India’s needs.

Source: TH