



## Vaccine Passports

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### Why in News

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Governments around the world are exploring the potential use of vaccine passports as a way of reopening the economy by identifying those protected against the coronavirus.

### Key Points

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- **About Vaccine Passports:**

- A vaccine passport is an e-certificate that stores and records jabs and **Covid-19** test status.
  - It can be kept in a smartphone app or in other digital formats.
  - Its contents can be flashed at security checkpoints when people travel across borders.
- The idea is modelled on the proof of **vaccination** that several countries required even before the pandemic.

Travellers from many African countries to the USA or India are required to submit proof that they have been vaccinated against diseases such as **yellow fever**.
- In February 2021, Israel became the first country to introduce a certification system that allows those who have been vaccinated against Covid-19 to access certain facilities and events.

- **Function of Vaccine Passports:**

- Will **digitise vaccination records** across countries.
- Supposed to **function as proof** that the holder has been vaccinated against Covid-19 and is, therefore, safe.

- **Potential Beneficiary of the Vaccine Passports:**

- The primary benefit will be to the **tourism and the hospitality industries**, which are both seen as being at the heart of Covid-19 spread and are the worst hit by the pandemic.
- The **international air travel**, which suffered massively because of the outbreak.

- **Similar Initiative:** Several associations and non-profits have been issuing their own versions for international travel:
  - **IATA Travel Pass:** The global trade body representing airlines (**The International Air Transport Association**) is developing an app called IATA Travel Pass that will provide airlines and other aviation industry stakeholders with a common platform to check for the proof of vaccination and its validity.
  - **CommonPass:** Non-profit Commons Project has been trying out an app called CommonPass, which contains a passenger's vaccination record.
- **Concerns Raised in Instituting Vaccine Passport:**
  - **WHO's Stand:**
    - The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** is **against the introduction of Covid-19 vaccination proofs** as a requirement for international travel.
    - There are still critical **unknown facts regarding the efficacy of vaccination** in reducing transmission.
  - **Lack of Uniformity:** The major difficulty in implementation will be the lack of uniformity across jurisdictions in requirement and issuance of proofs of vaccination.
  - **Inadequate Availability of Vaccines:** Preferential vaccination of travellers could result in inadequate supplies of vaccines for priority populations considered at high risk of severe Covid-19 disease.
 

Introducing a requirement of vaccination as a condition for travel has the potential to **hinder equitable global access to a limited vaccine supply** and would be unlikely to maximize the benefits of vaccination for individual societies and overall global health.
  - **Perpetuate Discrimination and Inequality:** Experts argue that vaccine passports, in any form, might make travel inequitable. Adoption of these digital passports can perpetuate discrimination and inequality, increasing the divide between socioeconomic groups.
    - Rich countries that have already bought millions of doses from pharmaceutical companies are ahead in the race. The poorer nations may have to wait for months, if not years, to start inoculations.
    - This means that if vaccine passports become a norm, then these **lower-income nations will lose out on the advantage.**
    - It will lead to exclusion of the younger generation who would be last in line to be vaccinated.
  - **Privacy Concerns:** These are mainly digital certificates that are accessed by a particular service provider to check for proof of vaccination, there is a possibility that they would be used by authorities to **track the movement of their holders.**

**Source: IE**