

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 2 Social Justice – Issues relating to Health.

Rolling Out Cervical Cancer Vaccines in India: Tackling a Silent Threat

Background: Cervical cancer claims 75,000 lives annually in India, constituting a significant global burden. The government's initiative to introduce indigenous Cervavac by the Serum Institute of India (SII) aims to address this health crisis.

Understanding HPV and its Link to Cervical Cancer:

- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is prevalent in 90% of sexually active women, with specific types (16, 18, 6, and 11) associated with cancer risk.
- The vaccine prevents the entry of these HPV types, reducing the incidence of infections, genital warts, and cervical cancers.

Preventive Impact of HPV Vaccination:

- Cervical cancer cases, linked to persistent high-risk HPV infections, can be significantly reduced through vaccination.
- The vaccine's administration is crucial before sexual activity begins, with a focus on adolescent girls for optimal efficacy.

Target Groups for HPV Vaccination:

1. Adolescent Girls:

- Crucial to administer before sexual activity.
- Enhanced vaccine response in adolescence.

2. Adolescent Boys:

- Although not part of the government campaign, vaccination is recommended.
- Also recommended for men who have sex with men.

3. Up to Age 45:

- While effectiveness decreases with age, vaccination is still viable up to 45 years.

Challenges in Cervical Cancer Prevention:

1. Cost Barrier:

- The vaccine's expense, approximately Rs 2,000 per dose, poses affordability challenges for a significant population.

2. Lack of Awareness:

- A substantial lack of awareness about cervical cancer, preventive measures, and screening requirements persists.

Recommendations for Comprehensive Prevention:

1. Affordability Initiatives:

- Implement measures to reduce vaccine costs, ensuring accessibility for a broader demographic.

2. Public Awareness Campaigns:

- Launch targeted awareness initiatives to educate the public on cervical cancer risks, prevention, and the importance of screenings.

3. Screening Programs:

- Strengthen screening programs, emphasizing at least two screenings by ages 35 and 45, aligning with recommended guidelines.

Conclusion: Introducing Cervavac presents a significant stride in combating cervical cancer in India. Addressing cost barriers and enhancing awareness are pivotal for the success of this vaccination campaign, contributing to a healthier future for women across the nation.

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 2 International Relations – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

The Status of Trade between India and Oman: Navigating Opportunities and Challenges

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of international trade, the evolving relationship between India and Oman holds significant promise. As negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) near conclusion, it becomes imperative to delve into the current status of trade between these two nations and the broader Gulf region. This article explores the potential benefits and challenges arising from the proposed India-Oman Free Trade Agreement, shedding light on the intricate web of economic dynamics at play.

The Current Trade Scenario

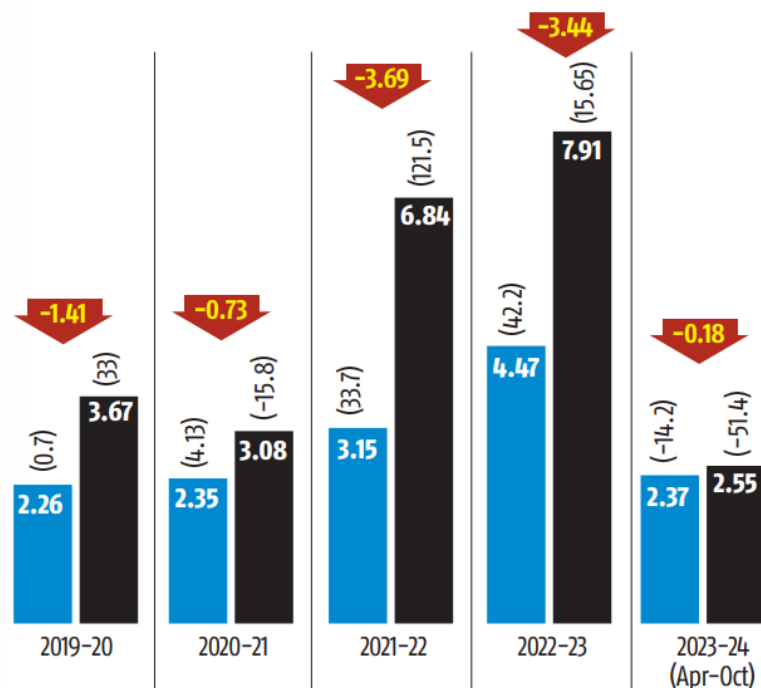
India's trade ties with Oman and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have witnessed notable growth in recent years. Despite Oman ranking as India's 29th largest trading partner, it stands out as the 3rd largest export destination among the GCC nations. The bilateral trade trajectory has been on an upward trend, surging from \$3.15 billion in the fiscal year 2021-22 to an impressive \$4.48 billion during FY23, marking a substantial 42% growth.

INDIA-OMAN TRADE

(in \$ bn)

■ Exports ■ Imports ▼ Trade Balance

Figures in brackets denote growth in %



Source: Department of Commerce

India's Exports and Imports

India's export portfolio to Oman includes key commodities such as gasoline, iron and steel, electronics, and machinery. On the flip side, India imports petroleum products, urea, propylene, and ethylene polymers from Oman. The Gulf region, collectively contributing about 1/6th of India's total trade, remains a significant economic partner. However, the trade balance tilts in favour of the GCC, primarily due to India's substantial petroleum imports.

Potential Benefits of the India-Oman CEPA

1. Facilitate Trade

The CEPA holds the promise of substantially reducing customs duties, possibly bringing them down to zero in specific instances. This reduction could pave the way for more streamlined and cost-

effective trade between the two nations.

2. Provide a Market for Indian Exports

Oman's high per capita income, standing at \$25,060 compared to India's \$2,370, positions it as a potential market for more expensive Indian exports. This economic disparity could open doors for India to explore new avenues for its diverse range of products.

3. Strategic Outreach in the Gulf

Against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions, particularly the Israel-Hamas conflict, India sees the CEPA as an opportunity to strengthen its relations with Persian Gulf nations. This move serves as a strategic balancing act and underscores India's diplomatic outreach in the region.

4. Balance Tilted in India's Favour

One of the critical advantages lies in the asymmetry of traded goods. Oman's exports to India are not perceived as a threat to Indian industries, offering a unique opportunity for India to gain market access for its finished products. This reciprocal arrangement could see raw materials from Oman entering India at lower or zero duties in exchange for market access for finished Indian goods.

Challenges Ahead

1. Limited Opportunities

Given Oman's relatively smaller size with a population of 5 million compared to India's 1.4 billion, the growth in trade between the two nations is expected to be inherently limited. India's vast consumer market dwarfs Oman's, posing challenges in realizing substantial growth in trade volumes.

Conclusion

As the proposed India-Oman Free Trade Agreement inches closer to fruition, the economic landscape between these nations is poised for a transformation. While the CEPA holds the promise of unlocking new avenues for trade and collaboration, it's essential to navigate the challenges judiciously. The intricate dance between economic giants and smaller nations underscores the need for a balanced and mutually beneficial trade relationship.