

India Inc wants jab delivery system eased

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The private sector can help scale up India's covid-19 vaccination drive by five times in the next 45 days but the process must be less cumbersome, industry leaders told *Mint*.

In the 40 days since the launch of the drive, 12.3 million frontline workers, such as healthcare professionals, have been vaccinated. However, with many states witnessing a new wave of infections, the involvement of private sector players has become an imperative, they said.

"When the private sector gets extensively involved, we can ramp up the vaccination effort five to 10 times," Shobana Kamineni, vice chairperson, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd, said. "We can do 50 million vaccinations in the next 45 days if the sites are ramped up and more people are encouraged to get vaccinated," she added.

On Wednesday, the Centre said the private sector will be allowed to join in the vaccination efforts. It also said that



Experts say the existing process, including registration on Co-Win app, can slow down the delivery of vaccines. AFP

from 1 March senior citizens and people above 45 years with co-morbidities can get vaccinated at the existing 10,000 government facilities and over 20,000 private hospitals.

Kamineni said Apollo can provide 2,000 sites and has identified 6,000-7,000 staff who can give the jabs. However, the existing processes, including the registration process on the Co-Win

app, multiple levels of checks, and the 'controlled environment' for vaccination, can slow down the process.

One suggestion to scale up vaccine delivery is to allow people to use their Aadhaar card to register for shots

"Many countries are vaccinating in car parks. If you have the guidelines, I don't see why you can't open up the drive-in safe sites, not necessarily hospitals," Kamineni said.

The private sector does not appear very confident about the Co-Win app. Reports from across India suggested sub-op-

timal performance of the software, with glitches ranging from duplication to missing names. "We (CII) have offered the government help in scaling up the app," T.V. Narendran, chief executive and managing director, Tata Steel Ltd, and the president-designate of industry body CII, said. "Second, people should be allowed to use Aadhaar cards to get vaccinated. It is a government ID and is in the system. That's a way to scale up. Then, you don't overload the Co-Win app with too many people trying to login."

Sudarshan Ballal, chairman, Manipal Health Enterprises Pvt. Ltd, agreed. "Covid vaccination should be like any other intramuscular vaccination. The process should be as simple as a walk-in, but since it is a new vaccine, there should be a provision for people to wait for half an hour to make sure there is no reaction," he said. "If the process is made cumbersome with apps, too many entries, it will slow down the drive."

The more time India takes to vaccinate its population, the more the chances of the virus mutating, and the need for upgraded vaccines.