

## COVAX delivers one billion doses, reaches milestone

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Dhaka: A new milestone of delivering one billion Covid-19 vaccine doses has been reached by the COVAX global vaccine-sharing programme, one of the organisations managing it said on January 15.

In the beginning, supplies to poor nations had been limited as there was a lack of vaccines and wealthier states secured most of the doses available from December 2020.

However, in the last quarter, shipments exponentially increased, allowing COVAX to deliver one billion doses to 144 countries, said Gavi, which co-leads the programme along with World Health Organisation.

COVAX was launched in 2020 with the aim of delivering two billion doses by 2021 end. However, it was slowed down by wealthier states' initial hoarding of limited vaccine doses, export restrictions and frequent changes within its organisation.

The programme began delivering vaccine doses in February 2021. Of which, around one-third have been donated by rich countries, despite COVAX's initial plans to supply only jobs procured directly by the programme with a budget of over USD 10 billion in donors' funds.

The change of strategy led to delays as donors often requested to send doses to countries

selected by them.

Yet, despite the recent surge in deliveries, vaccine inequity still remains high.

The latest data by WHO states 67 per cent of the population in rich countries have been fully vaccinated, compared with only 5 per cent in poor countries while over 40 per cent of the world's population has not yet received a first dose.

Hence, the vaccine alliance Gavi which co-manages COVAX now seeks more funds to reach WHO's target of vaccinating 70 per cent of the population in poor countries by July 2022.

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