

India's proposed IPR waiver on COVID vaccines

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In News: As the world grapples to counter the pandemic, pressure on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is mounting to seriously consider a proposal by India and South Africa for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver on COVID-19 vaccines.

Highlight

- According to a letter to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India and South Africa have asked to waive off the intellectual property rules in order to make it easier for the developing countries to import or produce the drugs for COVID-19.
- The two countries in their letter dated October 2, 2020, have called on the global trade body to waive parts of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which governs trademarks, patents, copyright, and other intellectual property rules globally.

What does the letter by South Africa and India state?

- The letter which was also posted on the Geneva-based WTO's website mentioned that as new diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics for Coronavirus are developed, there are significant rising concerns that how these will be able made available promptly, in sufficient quantities, and at an affordable price which will meet the global demand.
- The letter further asks that the WTO's Council for TRIPS recommends a waiver to the General Council which is WTO's top decision-making body in Geneva 'as early as possible'.

- It does not further mention how much of the support South Africa and India have from other countries.

What are the intellectual property rules by WTO?

- Intellectual property refers to the creations of the mind and these creations can take many forms such as signs, symbols, expressions, discoveries, new diagnostics in the scientific field among many others. To prevent others from using their new achievements, the government grants creators certain rights.
- The TRIPS agreement by WTO mentions that the governments have to ensure that intellectual property rights can be enforced to deter or prevent violations.
- The TRIPS agreement must be applied equally to the enforcement of IP rights and the WTO members must grant non-discriminatory treatment to the nationals of all WTO members and must not favour their own Nationals.