

Vaccine Nationalism

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In News

Even before the end of final stage human trials or regulatory approval, several wealthier countries like Britain, France, Germany and the US have entered into **pre-purchase agreements with Covid-19 vaccine manufacturers**, a development that has come to be known as “vaccine nationalism”.

More About Vaccine Nationalism

- When a country manages to secure doses of vaccines for its own citizens or residents and **prioritises its own domestic markets before they are made available in other countries** it is known as ‘vaccine nationalism’. This is done through pre-purchase agreements between a government and a vaccine manufacturer.
- The present race to hoard Covid-19 vaccines harks back to a **similar situation that happened in 2009 during the H1N1 flu pandemic**. Australia, the first country to come up with a vaccine, blocked exports while some of the wealthiest countries entered into pre-purchase agreements with several pharmaceutical companies.
- There are fears that such advance agreements **will make the initial few vaccines unaffordable and inaccessible to everyone apart from the rich countries** in a world of roughly 8 billion people.
- This has led to the World Health Organization (WHO) warning that nations that hoard possible Covid-19 vaccines while **excluding others would deepen the pandemic**.
- To bring about equitable and broad access, WHO, the **Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and Gavi have come up with an initiative known as “Covax Facility”**. The facility aims to procure at least two

billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines by the end of next year for **deployment and distribution mainly in the low and middle income countries.**

- According to London-based analytics firm Airfinity, the US, Britain, European Union and Japan have so far secured about 1.3 billion doses of potential Covid-19 vaccines.
- Interestingly, even though vaccine nationalism runs against global public health principles, there are **no provisions in international laws that prevent pre-purchase agreements.**
- The major drawback of vaccine nationalism is that it **puts countries with fewer resources and bargaining power at a disadvantage.**