

WHO HINTS AT SIGNS OF 'VACCINE NATIONALISM'

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Biotechnology, Genetics & Health related developments

NEW DELHI : Signs of 'vaccine nationalism' are apparent during the covid-19 pandemic with countries attempting to hoard [vaccines](#) by striking pre-purchase deals with manufacturing pharmaceutical companies.

According to the data released at the 148th session of the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Monday, more than 39 million doses of vaccine have now been administered in at least 49 higher-income countries. Just 25 doses have been given in one lowest-income country.

Also Read | [What 2020 did to India's inequality](#)

The WHO recently established COVAX global [vaccine](#) facility — a joint procurement program to accelerate the development and manufacture of covid-19 vaccines, and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world.

The apex global public health agency said that 44 bilateral deals were signed last year, and at least 12 have already been signed this year. The situation is compounded by the fact that most manufacturers have prioritized regulatory approval in rich countries where the profits are highest, rather than submitting full dossiers to WHO.

"We have secured 2 billion doses from five producers, with options on more than 1 billion more doses, and we aim to start deliveries in February. But in recent weeks I have heard from several Member States who have questioned whether COVAX will get the vaccines it needs, and whether high-income countries will keep the promises they have made," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general, WHO.

"As the first vaccines begin to be deployed, the promise of equitable access is at serious risk. The world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure – and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world's poorest countries," said Tedros adding that even as they speak the language of equitable access, some countries and companies continue to prioritize bilateral deals, going around COVAX, driving up prices and attempting to jump to the front of the queue.

The WHO chief said that the current situation could delay COVAX deliveries and create exactly the scenario COVAX was designed to avoid, with hoarding, a chaotic market, an uncoordinated response, and continued social and economic disruption.

"Not only does this me-first approach leave the world's poorest and most vulnerable people at risk, it's also self-defeating. Ultimately, these actions will only prolong the pandemic, the restrictions needed to contain it, and human and economic suffering," said Tedros. The WHO has called on countries with bilateral contracts – and control of supply – to be transparent on these contracts with COVAX, including on volumes, pricing and delivery dates. "We call on these countries to give much greater priority to COVAX's place in the queue, and to share their own doses with COVAX, especially once they have vaccinated their own health workers and older populations, so that other countries can do the same," Tedros said.

The WHO chief also called on vaccine producers to provide WHO with full data for regulatory review in real time, to accelerate approvals. "We also call on producers to allow countries with

bilateral contracts to share doses with COVAX, and to prioritize supplying COVAX rather than new bilateral deals," said the WHO chief.

The COVAX Facility is part of COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, which is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the WHO – working in partnership with developed and developing country vaccine manufacturers, UNICEF, the World Bank, Civil Society Organisations and others.

A recent study estimated that the economic benefits of equitable vaccine allocation for 10 high-income countries would be at least 153 billion U.S. dollars in 2021, rising to 466 billion dollars by 2025. That's more than 12 times the total cost of the ACT Accelerator.

Click here to read the [Mint ePaper](#) Mint is now on Telegram. Join [Mint channel](#) in your Telegram and stay updated with the latest [business news](#).

Log in to our website to save your bookmarks. It'll just take a moment.

Oops! Looks like you have exceeded the limit to bookmark the image. Remove some to bookmark this image.

Your session has expired, please login again.

You are now subscribed to our newsletters. In case you can't find any email from our side, please check the spam folder.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS