TPP Legacy

Why in news?

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America exited from Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

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What is TPP?

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- 12 countries that border the Pacific Ocean signed the TPP in February 2016.
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- The pact aimed to deepen economic ties between these nations, slashing tariffs and fostering trade to boost growth.
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- But, once the new U.S. administration came to power, one of the first thing it did was to veto U.S. participation in the TPP.
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Why TPP was opposed?

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- It was opposed because of its far-reaching provisions that increased corporate power over trade at the expense of workers and consumers.
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- It provided explicit protection for ‘biologics’ – drugs manufactured in a living organism, rather than through chemical synthesis.
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- It also provided for a provision called called ‘data exclusivity’ or ‘marketing exclusivity’.
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- It prevented a generic company (that provides cheaper medicine) from relying on the clinical test results in order to prove the efficacy of its drug.
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What is the legacy of TPP?

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- The developed world’s ambitions for intellectual property will not die with TPP. It might simply migrate to other agreements like Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement which involves 16 countries.
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- The RCEP negotiations also feature some of the intellectual property provisions of the TPP. This is a great concern for access to medicines globally, especially for key generic drug-producing countries like India.
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- U.S. withdrawal from the TPP may change the U.S.’ approach to trade and intellectual property by switching from trade agreements that includes several countries to bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs).
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- So, the U.S. is likely to continue (if not worsen it) its vigorous campaign against the violators of U.S. intellectual property.
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- Despite the public health impact of the TPP’s provisions, it is unlikely that these concerns will guide U.S. trade or foreign policy.
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What is the way ahead?

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- In reality, the TPP had been dead long. But the global subversion of access to medicines through trade agreements and diplomatic pressure by the U.S. will continue.
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- So, there is now a greater need for vigilance against the ever-expanding corporate control over generic medicines.
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- In India, we need greater government commitment to the use of the public health safeguards in our patent law to survive this era.
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Source: The Hindu

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