

PIB NEWS ANALYSIS

‘International Symposium on Health Governance in a Political Landscape: Interplay of Health Law, Society and Political Economy’ held

Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL), Indian Institute of Foreign Trade established by Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, in collaboration with Centre for Justice, Law and Society (CJLS) at Jindal Global Law School (JGLS), organized the International Symposium on Health Governance in a Political Landscape: Interplay of Health Law, Society and Political Economy.

Dr. V.K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog delivered the inaugural address highlighting the importance of access to medicine and right to health and shared his experiences for policy implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Paul emphasised the need for inspiring leadership in policymaking, particularly health policy, by citing the example of India’s leadership as a vaccine supplier to the developing countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Paul also discussed how the deficiencies of India’s Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 were addressed by invoking the Disaster Management Act, 2005 for implementing the health-related emergency measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prof. C. Raj Kumar, Vice Chancellor, O.P. Jindal Global University & Dean, JGLS delivered opening remarks along with the welcome address by Prof. James J. Nedumpara, Head & Professor, CTIL and Prof. Dipika Jain, Professor, JGLS & Director, CJLS respectively.

Hon’ble Mr. Justice Ravindra Bhat, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India chaired the plenary session 1 on the theme “Economic Policies, TRIPS and Healthcare: Building Bridges for Access”. Mr. Justice Bhat highlighted the importance of public interest as a ground for granting injunction in pharmaceutical patent disputes. Mr. Justice Bhat focussed on access to health and its intersection with the Intellectual property Right laws in broader parlance and interlinkages between health, trade, and access to medicines which balance economic and public rights. The panellists emphasized the need for innovative policy solutions and greater collaboration between governments, pharmaceutical companies, and international organizations to promote affordable access to medicines for all.

The second plenary session on the theme "Ink & Insight: Living the Scholarly Life Through Thought, Research & Publication" focused on the role of research and publication in shaping public health policy, particularly evidence-based policymaking. The panellists highlighted the influence of economic interests and conflicts of interest in health policy formulation and stressed on the importance of transparency in policymaking.

Dr. Sharmila Mary Joseph, Principal Secretary of Kerala's Local Self-Government and Women & Child Development Department, delivered a special address that emphasized local bodies' crucial role in addressing healthcare challenges and utilizing development funds effectively. Subsequently, thematic sessions explored diverse aspects of health governance, including intellectual property rights (IPRs), medicine accessibility, research ethics, and technology's impact on health outcomes.

The first day of symposium concluded with a special address by Prof. Chantal Thomas, Vice Dean and Radice Family Professor of Law, Cornell Law School, United States of America highlighted India's significant role in healthcare, emphasizing its moral leadership during Covid-19 and in bringing out the Doha 2001 declaration. She called for an analytical shift in legal and political discourse, advocating for dynamic trade models that consider gender and promoting participatory politics in international trade law.

The thematic sessions on Day 2 featured esteemed speakers and participants delving into critical health governance issues, particularly in TWAIL and Health Equity, abortion rights, reproductive justice, and TRIPS and regional integration in health. Both days' thematic sessions saw discussions among eminent academicians such as Prof. (Dr.) B.S. Chimni, Distinguished Professor of International Law, JGU; Professor (Dr.) S. G. Sreejith, Professor & Executive Dean, Jindal Global Law School & Executive Director, Centre for International Legal Studies, JGU; Prof. James J. Nedumpara, Head & Professor, CTIL; Dr. Sylvia Karpagam, Public Health Doctor and Researcher, Bengaluru; Prof. Leila Choukroune, Professor of International Economic Law & Director of the University of Portsmouth Thematic Initiative in Democratic Citizenship; Prof. Shailja Singh, Associate Professor, CTIL; Prof. Shiny Pradeep, Assistant Professor, CTIL; and the participants.

The symposium ended with a special address by Dr. Anup Wadhawan, former Commerce Secretary, Government of India and a distinguished lecture by Prof. Lorand Bartels on "International Economic Law and Right to Health". Dr. Anup Wadhawan emphasized the complexities of ensuring access to medicines, urging conscious policy choices like reforming the IPR regime for public health goals. Prof. Bartels emphasized that health is reiterated a fundamental human right within international law. He also cited the Chilean alcohol tax case to underscore challenges in policy implementation. Prof. Ashita Dawer, Associate Professor of Economics, Jindal Global Law School, JGU delivered the concluding remarks. This session was moderated by Ms. Ronjini Ray, Consultant (Legal) Assistant Professor, CTIL.

The Symposium offered scholars and early-stage academicians, both domestic and international, a platform to present their research articles to expert commentators. Following feedback from the commentators, scholars will refine their articles for publication in a Special Issue of Jindal Global Law Review. Prof. James J. Nedumpara, Head & Professor, CTIL delivered the concluding observations of the Symposium.