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Pfizer, Moderna vaccines could be in India soon

India could get access to foreign-made Covid-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna over the next few months. Pfizer on Monday said it is in talks with the Centre for an “expedited approval pathway” to roll out its messenger RNA vaccine. Moderna said it would deliver 34 million doses of its mRNA vaccine to low-income countries, which could include India and Brazil, as part of the WHO Covax initiative.

Meanwhile, the government said it has placed orders for 16 crore Covishield and Covaxin vaccines to be supplied in May-July. Adar Poonawalla said SII has govt orders to supply 11 crore more doses over the next few months. P11

Pfizer, Moderna vax may be in India soon

But Pharma Cos Stay Silent On Patent Waiver

Rupali Mukherjee &
Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Mumbai/Washington: India could get access to Pfizer and Moderna vaccines over the next few months.

Hopes on Pfizer's vaccine brightened on Monday, with the company saying it is in talks with the Indian government for an "expedited approval pathway" to roll-out its messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine. The US drug giant did not provide details of the doses, price or specific timelines of the launch.

Pfizer was the first company to seek emergency use authorisation for its vaccine in India late last year, but withdrew in February after the drugs regulator sought local safety studies. Last month, it said it will offer the vaccine at a "not-for-profit" price for the government's immunisation programme.

In the case of Moderna, the US firm said it will deliver 34 million doses of its mRNA vaccine to low-income countries, which could include India and Brazil, as part of the World Health Organization-backed Covax initiative. Through an agreement, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance also retains the option to procure an additional 466 million doses in 2022 at the lowest-tied price. On April 30, the World Health Organization issued an emergency use listing for Moderna's vaccine.

The development comes as India is facing a huge shortage of vaccines, even as the cases and deaths due to Co-



FRANCE RELAXES CURBS: France's secondary and high schools have reopened and a ban on domestic travel has been lifted as part of the government's plan to gradually reopen the country. The French are now allowed to go further than 10km from their homes, a rule that has been applied for four weeks in efforts to stem the spread of the virus

vid-19 continue to surge.

Further, Pfizer announced that it is rushing shipments worth \$70 million (around Rs 525 crore) of critical drugs like steroids and antibiotics, which are part of India's Covid-19 treatment protocol. "We are donating these medicines to help make sure that every Covid-19 patient in

every public hospital across the country can have access to the Pfizer medicines they need free of charge. This includes steroid medications to reduce inflammation, anticoagulants to help prevent blood clotting and antibiotics that treat secondary bacterial infections. This effort has the potential to impact the li-

ves of hundreds of thousands of patients across India over the next 90 days," Pfizer chairman and chief executive Albert Bourla said in a post on LinkedIn.

The assertions did not address the patent issue that many world leaders and health activists, including WHO director general Ted-

ros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and US Senator Bernie Sanders, say is at the heart of a long-term solution.

Faced with huge vaccine shortages amid a massive surge in cases, the Indian government decided to fast-track approvals for foreign-produced Covid-19 vaccines authorised by major global regula-

tors. According to the new policy, vaccines approved by Western regulators including the US Food and Drug Administration, UK's MHRA and the WHO will be granted emergency authorisation in India, with the company conducting post-approval parallel bridging studies in place of local clinical trials.