

# Govt inks pact, first vax lot to fly today

Serum to supply 11 mn doses at ₹200 a dose initially

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India has signed the much-awaited first purchase agreement for the government-sponsored Covid vaccination programme with Pune-based Serum Institute of India. Talks were on with Hyderabad-headquartered Bharat Biotech till the time of going to press. The nationwide vaccination drive is starting on January 16.

According to sources, Serum Institute, which is manufacturing the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, is likely to supply around 11 million doses of Covishield in the first lot to the Centre for ₹200 per dose. Pricing for Covaxin from Bharat Biotech is being negotiated, a person close to the development said. The companies declined to comment on the matter.

The first consignment of vaccines is likely to be shipped by air on Tuesday morning, said people in the know. Serum Institute had earlier indicated that it would price the vaccine at ₹200 per dose for the first 100 million doses it supplies to the government. For the private market, however, the vaccine would cost around ₹1,000 per dose.

Bharat Biotech has not indicated any pricing, but has said it would be a factor of volumes. Sources had, however, indicated that the Hyderabad-based company may price its vaccine lower than Serum's Covishield.

India is looking to vaccinate nearly 30 million, mostly health workers, in the first phase of vaccination drive by the Centre, implying a requirement of 60 million doses. Eventually, the government plans to vaccinate some 300 million by July. For that, it needs 600 million doses.

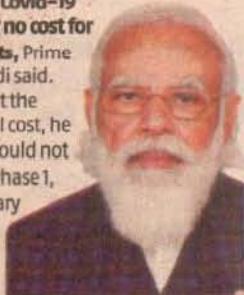
It is not clear how the Centre would divide the 60 million doses between the two vaccine makers during the first tranche. Between

## Centre will bear full cost of Phase 1: Modi

The first phase of the Covid-19 vaccination will incur no cost for

the state governments, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

While announcing that the Centre will bear the full cost, he also said politicians should not opt for the vaccine in Phase 1, which begins on January 16 and is meant to cover frontline workers. 16 ▶



## Pfizer compiling data to answer DCGI queries



US major Pfizer, which was one of the first firms to apply for restricted emergency use approval in India, said it was compiling responses to queries raised by the Indian regulator. The company spokesperson clarified that the firm was committed to

engaging with the Government of India. 2 ▶

them, the two companies together have around 70 million doses ready to be supplied to the government. Serum Institute has 50 million packed doses while Bharat Biotech has around 20 million or so.

Bharat Biotech had earlier indicated it would have an annual supply of around 700 million doses from multiple facilities for Covaxin. By July, the company wants to be ready with 150 million doses.

## Govt inks...

On January 3, the country's drug regulator approved two vaccines — Covishield from Serum Institute and Covaxin from Bharat Biotech — for restricted use under emergency situation. Of the two, Covaxin, which is undergoing phase 3 trials, has been allowed a roll out in clinical trial mode.

Restricted use means the companies do not have a marketing authorisation required to sell the vaccines in the private market, be it in India or abroad. Serum Institute already has supply agreements in place with Gavi-Covax, an initiative of the World Health Organisation to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines globally. European countries and the US have shown interest in procuring Covaxin, the firm has said.

People would need to give informed consent before they are given the Covaxin shot and they would be monitored regularly after the jab. As for Serum Institute, the regulator has asked it to submit data of any adverse event after vaccination every 15 days for the first two months and once a month subsequently.