

India to approve coronavirus shots green-lit by WHO, others

April 13 2021, by Aniruddha Ghosal



A note informing about the COVID-19 vaccine is seen pasted on a wall of a vaccination centre in Mumbai, India, Thursday, April 8, 2021. India's western Maharashtra state, home to financial capital Mumbai, is the worst-hit and has nearly half of the country new infections in the past week. And now some vaccination centers are turning away people due to a shortage. The state said Wednesday that stocks would run out in three days, promoting an angry denial from India's health minister Harsh Vardhan, who blamed the state for "singularly bogging down the entire country's efforts to fight the virus." (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)

India said Tuesday that it will approve the use of all coronavirus vaccines that have been given an emergency nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan.

India's Health Ministry said the decision was aimed at hastening the use of shots made in other countries and expanding the "basket of vaccines" available for domestic use. The country of almost 1.4 billion people is seeing a crippling surge of infections that is threatening to overwhelm hospitals in hard-hit cities.

The only way out of the crisis, experts say, is to vaccinate more people.

But this has global implications since India is a major vaccine producer and India's domestic needs have delayed the delivery of shots to the U.N.-backed COVAX initiative that is aimed at distributing vaccines equitably.

India had earlier given the nod to the AstraZeneca vaccine made by Serum Institute of India and another one made by the Indian company Bharat Biotech.

Now, vaccines that have received emergency use authorization by regulators in the U.S., Europe, Britain, Japan or the World Health Organization can be used in India. The Health Ministry also said Tuesday that the Russian Sputnik V vaccine had been green-lit for emergency use.



In this Sunday, March 21, 2021, file photo, a medical worker wearing protective gear stands outside booths displaying directions for Russia's Sputnik V and the AstraZeneca vaccines, as she waits for people to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination center in Belgrade, Serbia. India said Tuesday, April 13, that it will approve the use of all coronavirus vaccines that have been given an emergency nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. India's Health Ministry said the decision was aimed at hastening the use of shots made in other countries and expanding the "basket of vaccines" available for domestic use. The country of almost 1.4 billion people is seeing a crippling surge of infections that is threatening to overwhelm hospitals in hard-hit cities. (AP Photo/Darko Vojinovic, File)

The Health Ministry said that safety will be monitored in the first 100

people who receive these shots, before its use is expanded to include others.

Dr. Shahid Jameel, who studies viruses at India's Ashoka University, said that while the move was unlikely to help the country deal with the surge it was currently experiencing, it would help in vaccine availability going forward, consequently freeing up vaccines that could then be exported.

He said that this would pave the path for India to use vaccines made by companies with a manufacturing partner in India. For instance, vaccine maker Biological E Ltd is contracted to make the Johnson & Johnson [coronavirus vaccine](#).

Jameel added that this would potentially open up the market for vaccines that require ultra-cold storage facilities to be sold in cities where such facilities are available. Vaccine prices in India are currently capped at 250 rupees or \$3.30. This will also free up the government to subsidize the vaccines for the poor, while those can afford to buy more expensive vaccines can do so.



A health worker administers the AstraZeneca vaccine for COVID-19, made by Serum Institute, at a vaccination centre in Mumbai, India, Sunday, April 11, 2021. India said Tuesday that it will approve the use of all coronavirus vaccines that have been given an emergency nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. India's Health Ministry said the decision was aimed at hastening the use of shots made in other countries and expanding the "basket of vaccines" available for domestic use. The country of almost 1.4 billion people is seeing a crippling surge of infections that is threatening to overwhelm hospitals in hard-hit cities. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



Employees pack boxes containing vials of AstraZeneca's COVISHIELD vaccine at the Serum Institute of India, IN Pune, India, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021. India said Tuesday, April 13, that it will approve the use of all coronavirus vaccines that have been given an emergency nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. India had already given the nod to the AstraZeneca vaccine and another one made by Indian vaccine maker Bharat Biotech. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



Policemen try to control the crowd as people wearing masks as a precaution against the coronavirus stand in a queue to board trains at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus in Mumbai, India, Monday, April 12, 2021. India said Tuesday that it will approve the use of all coronavirus vaccines that have been given an emergency nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. New infections have surged in the past month and India has now reported over 13.6 million cases—pushing its toll past Brazil, and making it second only to the United States. In the past 24 hours, over 160,000 new infections have been detected and experts fear that the worst is yet to come. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



People wearing masks as a precaution against the coronavirus sit in a group outside a railway station in Mumbai, India, Tuesday, April 13, 2021. India said Tuesday that it will approve the use of all coronavirus vaccines that have been given an emergency nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. New infections have surged in the past month and India has now reported over 13.6 million cases—pushing its toll past Brazil, and making it second only to the United States. In the past 24 hours, over 160,000 new infections have been detected and experts fear that the worst is yet to come. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



Hindu devotees wearing face masks as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus wait to offer prayers inside a temple dedicated to goddess Kali in Jammu, India, Tuesday, April 13, 2021. India said Tuesday that it will approve the use of all coronavirus vaccines that have been given an emergency nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. New infections have surged in the past month and India has now reported over 13.6 million cases—pushing its toll past Brazil, and making it second only to the United States. In the past 24 hours, over 160,000 new infections have been detected and experts fear that the worst is yet to come. (AP Photo/Channi Anand)



Employees operate a filling machine inside a laboratory at the Serum Institute of India, in Pune, India, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021. India said Tuesday, April 13, that it will approve the use of all coronavirus vaccines that have been given an emergency nod by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. India had already given the nod to the AstraZeneca vaccine and another one made by Indian vaccine maker Bharat Biotech. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



A health worker, right, and a relative helps a patient shift her from a dedicated COVID hospital to another hospital to vacate the bed for new patients, at Civil hospital in Ahmedabad, India, Tuesday, April 13, 2021. New infections have surged in the past month and India has now reported over 13.6 million cases, pushing its toll past Brazil, and making it second only to the United States. In the past 24 hours, over 160,000 new infections have been detected and experts fear that the worst is yet to come. (AP Photo/Ajit Solanki)



Health worker carry patients to shift them from a dedicated COVID hospital to another hospital to vacate the bed for new patients, at Civil hospital in Ahmedabad, India, Tuesday, April 13, 2021. New infections have surged in the past month and India has now reported over 13.6 million cases, pushing its toll past Brazil, and making it second only to the United States. In the past 24 hours, over 160,000 new infections have been detected and experts fear that the worst is yet to come. (AP Photo/Ajit Solanki)

Russia has agreements with five Indian pharmaceutical companies to make more than 850 million doses of Sputnik V vaccines in India for the world. It has also inked a deal with Dr Reddy's Laboratories to conduct late trials and distribute up to 250 million doses in India.

But with four of Russia's five deals inked in March and April, the doses

are likely to be supplied later in the year. Moreover, Russia's first manufacturing deal with India was with Hetero Biopharma for a 100 million doses—but it is unclear as to whether it has started making doses. Hetero Biopharma didn't respond to queries by The Associated Press.

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