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China agrees to supply more Japanese encephalitis shots

India May Have To Pay More For Additional Vaccine Imports

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New Delhi: India has managed to woo China for additional supplies of Japanese encephalitis (JE) vaccine for expansion of the government's immunization programme. However, India may have to pay more for the additional supplies, official sources said.

China had earlier refused to supply more vaccines to India, than what it is being supplied, citing capacity constraints and commitments to other countries.

"Problems have been taken care of. Our delegation had gone. They have agreed for the additional supplies. We



A SHOT IN THE ARM

are comfortable on that issue. But still much more is needed as we would like to take more stocks (JE vaccine). We are in continuous dialogue with them," Union health minister JP Nadda said.

Nadda, who left for China to attend international inter-ministerial conference on population and development,

said the two countries need to discuss and deliberate on health issues before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Beijing.

PM Modi is expected to visit China around May-June. According to official sources, trade of pharmaceuticals between the two countries is going to be one of the key issues on the agenda.

India's over dependence on China for key vaccines and mainly for sourcing of raw material used in medicines has become a cause of concern for the government. Though India itself is a major producer of low cost generic medicines, it imports more than 80% of bulk drug or ac-

tive pharmaceutical ingredient (API), used in medicine formulations, from China. Even intelligence agencies have warned that over-dependence on China for such key medicines can lead to severe shortages in India.

On the other hand, non-trade barriers have held back Indian drug companies from exporting formulations to the Chinese market.

Now the government is trying to support the domestic pharmaceutical industry to rebuild API clusters and start manufacturing of key vaccines in public sector enterprises to avoid a crisis.

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