

Serum Institute gets approval to resume India trial of AstraZeneca COVID vaccine: source



A test tube labelled with the Vaccine is seen in front of Covid-19 and stock graph logo in this illustration taken

Reuters | Mumbai/New Delhi

Serum Institute of India has received Indian regulatory approval to resume local clinical trials of AstraZeneca's potential COVID-19 vaccine, a source familiar with the matter said on Wednesday.

The approval came from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), according to the source.

AstraZeneca has resumed British clinical trials of the vaccine, one of the most advanced in development for COVID-19, after they were paused earlier this month following a serious side effect in a trial participant.

Trials have also resumed in

Brazil and South Africa, but remain on hold in the United States.

Indian regulators had allowed Serum's trials of the AstraZeneca vaccine to resume under certain conditions, including increased safety monitoring and informing volunteers about new findings, a DCGI source said.

"We allowed them (to resume trials) after a detailed discussion with authorities in the UK and the company itself," the source added.

Serum, the world's biggest vaccine manufacturer, did not respond to Reuters requests for comment, while DCGI representatives did not respond to emails seeking comment.

Sri Lanka seeks at least \$1.9 million damage from owner of fire-hit tanker



A Sri Lankan Navy boat sprays water on the New Diamond, a very large crude carrier (VLCC) chartered by Indian Oil Corp (IOC), that was carrying the equivalent of about 2 million barrels of oil, after a fire broke out off east coast of Sri Lanka

Reuters | Colombo

Sri Lanka is seeking at least 340 million rupees (\$1.89 million) from the owners of the stricken supertanker New Diamond for assistance rendered to the vessel since it caught fire on Sept. 3, the coordinating officer to its attorney general said.

Nishara Jayaratne said the cost is for services provided by various departments including the Sri Lankan navy, Ports Authority and its marine environment protection authority up until Sept. 15.

The vessel is still in Sri Lankan waters although the fire was completely doused last week.

Girl power in the deep blue sea

World's largest fish are female

Reuters | Washington

Male and female whale sharks - filter-feeding marine behemoths - grow at different rates, with females doing so more slowly but getting much larger than the guys, according to research that offers deeper insight into the biology of Earth's largest fish.

Researchers said on Wednesday they had tracked the growth of 54 whale sharks over a 10-year period in the vast Ningaloo Reef off Australia's west coast, where hundreds of these slow-swimming endangered fish migrate annually.

Whale sharks of both sexes were found to have their fastest growth as juveniles, about 8-12 inches (20-30 cm) annually.

Overall, males were found to grow slightly more quickly than females, plateauing at around 26 feet (8 meters) long after reaching sexual maturity at about 30 years old. Females plateaued at around 14 meters (46 feet) when they reached sexual maturity at about age 50.

It is believed whale sharks may live 100-150 years. The longest-known whale shark reached about 60 feet (18 meters).

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AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE MARINE BIOLOGIST MARK MEEKAN, WHO LED THE RESEARCH PUBLISHED THE JOURNAL FRONTIERS IN MARINE SCIENCE.

most certainly a prerequisite for carrying this many young inside a female's body," said Australian Institute of Marine Science ma-

ri ne biologist

Mark Meekan, who led the research published the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science*.

These sharks have a brownish-grayish color on the back and sides with white spots, with a white underside.

"Our study provides the first evidence that male and female whale sharks grow at different rates," Meekan said. "Previously, researchers had to rely on estimates of growth and age extracted from the vertebrae of dead sharks that had either stranded on shore or been killed by a fishery. Samples were very limited and didn't cover a very wide size range of animals, con-

found- ing attempts to produce reliable estimates of growth patterns."

They are filter feeders, swimming great distances through the world's tropical oceans to find enough plankton to sustain themselves.

"Our study has important implications for conservation," Meekan said. "If it takes many years, 30 or more, for these animals to become mature, there are lots of threats such as hunting and ship-strike that they may succumb to before they get a chance to breed, making conservation strategies for these animals an urgent task."

US plans to distribute COVID-19 vaccine immediately after regulators authorize it

Reuters | New York

The US government on Wednesday said it will start distributing a COVID-19 vaccine within one day of regulatory authorization as it plans for the possibility that a limited number of vaccine doses may be available at the end of the year.

Officials from the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Defense on Wednesday held a call with reporters and then released documents on the distribution plans that it is sending to the states and local public health officials.

The federal government will allocate vaccines for each state based on the critical populations recommended first for vaccination by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That group is expected to include essential healthcare workers.



Booth displaying coronavirus vaccine candidate from Sinovac Biotech Ltd in Beijing

The document, called the COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Playbook, said that "limited COVID-19 vaccine doses may be available by early November 2020 if a COVID-19 vaccine is authorized or licensed by FDA by that time, but COVID-19 vaccine supply may increase substantially in 2021."

Officials also said they were working to make sure there was no cost to patients for the vaccine.

Biden leads Trump nationally by 9 points

Reuters | New York

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden leads Republican President Donald Trump nationally among likely US voters by 9 percentage points, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll that showed Trump's "law and order" message falling short with its target audience of suburban voters.

The Sept. 11-15 opinion poll, released on Wednesday, found that 50 per cent of likely voters said they were casting their ballots for Biden while 41pc were doing the same for Trump. Another 3pc said they would support a third-party candidate and the rest were undecided.

The poll also showed that most American voters were locked in on their choice for president. Nine out of 10 likely Biden voters and 8 out of 10 likely Trump voters said they were "completely certain"



Joe Biden

about their choice for president. Only 1 in 10 likely Biden voters and fewer than 2 in 10 likely Trump voters appeared to be wavering in their choice.

The poll suggests that Biden has an early advantage in securing the national popular vote in the Nov. 3 presidential election. Still, 9pc of likely voters are undecided or have not yet supported either major-party candidate. Their decision in coming weeks could determine who wins.

US imposes sanctions on Chinese firm over Cambodia project

Reuters | Washington/Phnom Penh

The United States has blacklisted a Chinese developer of a port, airport and resort complex in Cambodia, saying it was built on land seized from local people and there were "credible reports" it could be used to host Chinese military assets.

Union Development Group Co. Ltd is building the Dara Sakor complex in a national park on the Cambodian coast, with a runway capable of taking some of the world's biggest planes.

The Chinese real-estate development company describes it as

the largest regional development project in China's global Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

The company and the Cambodian government have repeatedly denied Western media reports that the project has military aims.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said there were "credible reports" that Dara Sakor "could be used to host (Chinese) military assets".

"If so, (this) would go against Cambodia's constitution and could threaten Indo-Pacific stability, possibly impacting Cambodia's sov-

ereignty and the security of our allies," he added in a statement on Tuesday.

The US Treasury Department described the company as a Chinese state-owned entity, and said it had at one point falsely registered as Cambodian-owned to get land for the project, had forced Cambodians from their land and devastated the environment.

China's embassy in Cambodia condemned the U.S. sanctions. "It not only undermines legitimate business interests, but is a complete violation of Cambodia's sovereignty," it said on its Facebook page.