

YUENSIN

Every Singaporean who needs it will have access to a Covid-19 vaccine should one become available, National Development Minister Lawrence Wong said yesterday.

Outlining Singapore's strategy to control the spread of the virus in a national broadcast, he pledged that if and when a vaccine is ready, "we will make sure that every Singaporean who needs it gets it, and at an affordable price".

Mr Wong said a vaccine is an important part of the long-term solution to the crisis.

Singapore, which has a pharmaceutical industry and research capabilities in biomedical science, is involved in a "massive global effort" to develop a vaccine, said Mr Wong, co-chair of the multi-ministry task force tackling the pandemic.

There are now at least 130 vaccine candidates being developed globally. Duke-NUS Medical School is working with US firm Arcturus Therapeutics on a vaccine, which involves getting the human body to produce part of Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.

Home-grown contract development manufacturer Esco Aster is also working with US company Vivaldi Biosciences on a Covid-19 chimeric vaccine – one that is made by merging proteins from different viruses.

The Economic Development Board is also in talks with companies on manufacturing vaccines in Singapore, said Mr Wong.

Last week, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said Singapore is building up vaccine manufacturing capacity so production can be ramped up quickly and

# 'Anyone who needs vaccine will get it'

Lawrence Wong also assures Singaporeans that vaccine will be affordable



With some time to go before a vaccine is developed, Minister Lawrence Wong appealed to Singaporeans to continue to practise social responsibility. PHOTO: MCI

safely once a vaccine is found.

Mr Wong said that parallel to these efforts, clinicians and researchers around the world are working to develop drugs and other therapies to reduce the severity of the disease.

"But drug and vaccine development is very challenging

work," Mr Wong warned. There is no guarantee the drugs currently undergoing clinical trials will be effective, he said.

And despite the intensive efforts at developing a vaccine, it will also take a long time for any vaccine to be ready and available for mass distribution.

"We have to be realistic and gird ourselves for more challenging times," said Mr Wong, noting the Singapore population will remain vulnerable to the virus for a long time.

"We must therefore adapt to Covid-19, and learn to live with it over the long term. This does not depend upon government actions alone. Every one of us – government, businesses and individuals – must do our part."

He appealed to Singaporeans to remain disciplined and vigilant and continue to practise social responsibility in observing good personal hygiene and safe distancing measures.

"Collectively, these actions will make all the difference in keeping Covid-19 at bay. They will enable us to have a safe and sustainable reopening, as we have seen in countries like Denmark and New Zealand," said Mr Wong.

"Conversely, if we are lax in our personal precautions, new cases and new clusters will multiply quickly, and despite our best efforts to test and trace, we might end up in another circuit breaker down the road. So please cooperate with the restrictions, and keep everyone safe."

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