

# Vaccine will be made available to all S'poreans who need it

Minister gives assurance that those who need it will get vaccine, and at an affordable price

Yuen Sin

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

Outlining Singapore's strategy to control the spread of the coronavirus 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 that 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 the minister, who is co-chair of the multi-ministry task force tackling the pandemic.

There are now at least 130 vaccine candidates being developed globally, including in Singapore.

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

name of the virus that causes Covid-19.

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

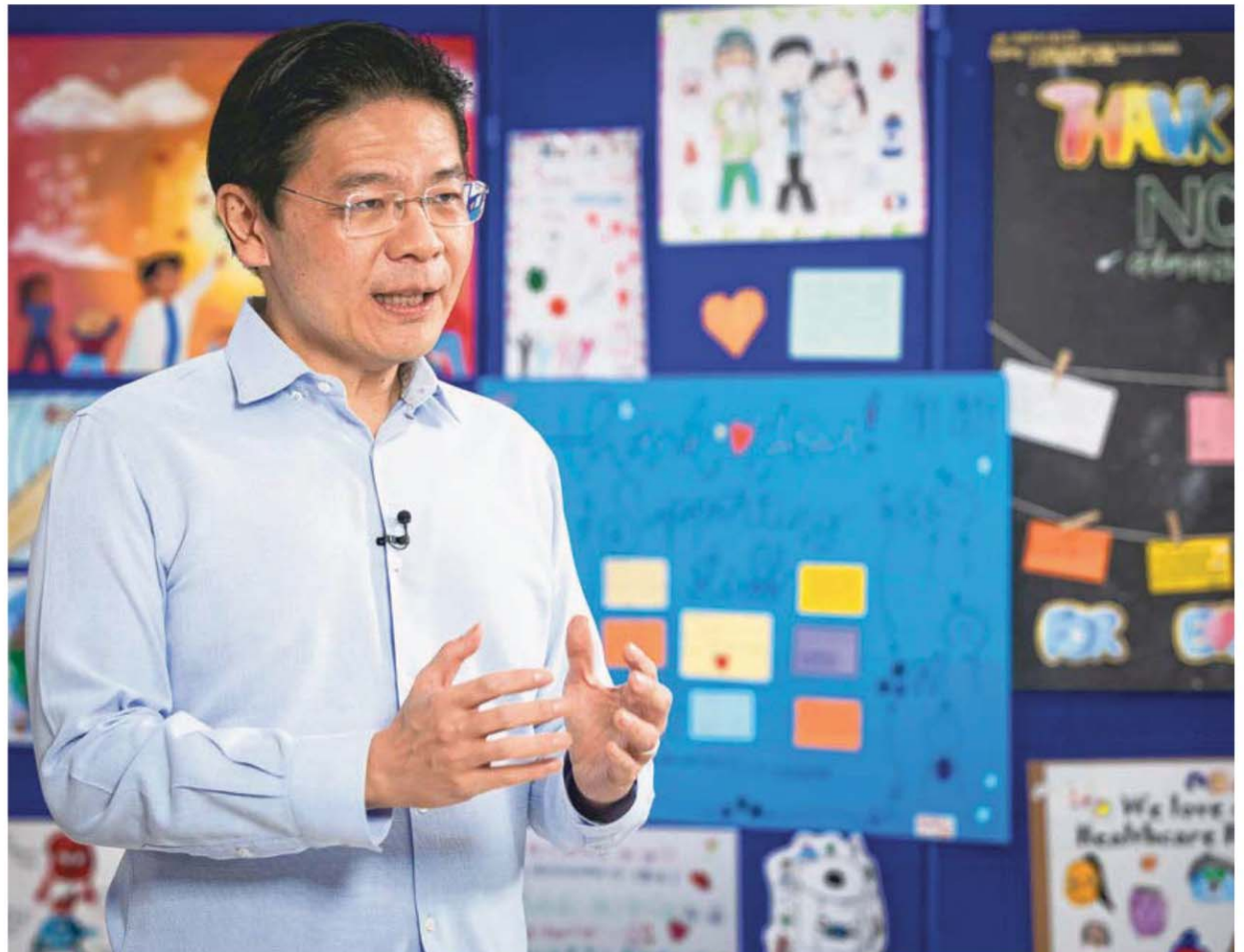
The Economic Development Board is also in talks with pharmaceutical companies on manufacturing vaccines in Singapore, said Mr Wong.

Last week, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said that Singapore is building up vaccine manufacturing capacity so that production can be ramped up quickly and safely once a Covid-19 vaccine is found.

Mr Wong added that in parallel to these efforts, clinicians and researchers around the world, including teams from Singapore, are working hard 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 international efforts at developing a vaccine, it will also take a long time for



National Development Minister Lawrence Wong, who delivered the second of six national broadcasts yesterday, said that despite the intensive international efforts at developing a vaccine, it will take a long time for any vaccine to be ready and available for mass distribution. ST PHOTO: MCI

EVERYONE'S COOPERATION NEEDED

**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.**



NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER LAWRENCE WONG

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 that the Singapore population will remain vulnerable to the coronavirus 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 said.

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

measures, including avoiding big gatherings and crowded places.

"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."

yuensin@sph.com.sg