

Government kept same rules for Indian, foreign firms while procuring Covid vaccines: Health Minister Mandaviya

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Foreign-made vaccines were not procured during [the Covid pandemic](#) as the firms were demanding indemnity, which was not made available to Indian vaccine manufacturers, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has said, asserting that the "same rule applies for all".

He also said that it was wrong to suggest that India stopped foreign-made vaccines like that made by Moderna and Pfizer from coming to India.

"We may have certain requirements and strengths and other countries may have some other strengths and needs. It is wrong to say that India stopped any country from coming to India. When they applied with required data, we gave them emergency use approvals just like we gave to Indian companies," Mr. Mandaviya told *PTI* recently.

However, their demands for indemnification and sovereign immunity waivers were a major impediment and eventually the government did not go ahead with it, the minister stated.

"At that time, Sputnik vaccine was also there and so were Indian vaccines. Whichever global company wants to come to India, they can come and sell their products, whether they are medicines or vaccines, we have no problem with that. But all need to follow India's rules and regulations. Our own companies did not ask for an indemnity. Sputnik did not ask for it," Mr. Mandaviya said.

"If our own companies are not seeking such relaxations and following our rules and regulations, then it is natural that global companies also do the same," he said.

The Minister stressed that countries need to cooperate with each other in the health sector in times of globalisation.

Highlighting that India wants to expand its relationship with the world in the pharma and health sectors, Mr. Mandaviya said, "We are not against anyone or in favour of anyone".

India is such a country that applies the same rules and regulations for Indian and foreign companies with equal rights.

"Not many countries give such equal rights, but India does. The world also appreciates this position of our country," Mr. Mandaviya stated.

Recounting the fight against the pandemic, Mr. Mandaviya, who took charge of the Health Ministry in the middle of the coronavirus crisis in July 2021, said Covid management was a big challenge for a vast and diverse country like India, but its success story has now become an example for the entire world.

The Minister also dismissed suggestions that approvals for vaccines were rushed without taking into account long-term side effects and that the recent spate of heart attacks was linked to it, saying the entire process from vaccine research to its administration followed all established international standards.

He said vaccine development and approvals used to take much longer earlier due to various physical and manual processes but the authorities and scientists made full use of the latest technology, including artificial intelligence, this time and, therefore, the entire process could be fast-tracked.

Mr. Mandaviya, a BJP leader from Gujarat known to enjoy the trust of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said, "Let me tell you that PM Modi followed scientific ways for all procedures from the very beginning, from Covid management to vaccine research to approvals to the vaccination drive."

"It was the PM's direction because of which INSACOG (Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium) and several other taskforce and empowered groups were set up for vaccine approvals and other protocols. In the entire Covid journey, we followed scientific ways to fight this pandemic.

"Scientists told us when the vaccines should be approved, and the entire data and data analysis was done as per international standards. India followed the same international standards that were followed by global companies," he said.

The Minister said it all indeed happened very fast in India but those questioning the speed must understand why the approvals came early.

"The times have changed. Earlier, data would get collected, their physical analysis would take place, and a lot of procedures would happen manually, but today we have artificial intelligence, the latest modelling methods, and digital technology, and we thought how can we speed up things by using all of these," he said.

"Whatever international practice is there for vaccine research and vaccine approval, India followed the same. India's vaccines are now known as the best in the world as they not only saved India but helped save the rest of the world also. Not just one, but five Indian-researched and manufactured vaccines are in the market today. Our vaccination journey has been based on scientific data while following all scientific protocols and methods, that I can assure you," he said.