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PAPER CLIPPINGS

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ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: *Other state matter*

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: *The Hindu*

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE *24/10/20*

30 vaccine programmes under way in India: scientist

Four vaccines are in clinical trials, says Gagandeep Kang

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India currently has some 30 vaccine programmes against SARS-CoV-2, "and they span every platform that is available in any part of the world", Gagandeep Kang, clinician-scientist at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, said on Friday.

The country has four vaccines that are in clinical trials, and the first one - Covaxin, which is the inactivated vaccine made by Bharat Biotech - will be going into Phase 3 clinical trials fairly soon, Professor Kang said.

She was speaking at the last of a three-part seminar jointly hosted by TNQ and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Janelia Research Campus.

The virtual seminars aimed to discuss the latest research on COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2, the impact of the pandemic on human population and the state of development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines.

Worldwide, there are



Gagandeep Kang

some 154 vaccines in the pre-clinical phase, 44 in clinical trials, of which 10 are already in Phase 3 trials, said Florian Krammer, Professor of Vaccinology at the Icahn School of Medicine, Mount Sinai, U.S. However, even if vaccines are eventually licensed and enter the market, there will be hurdles to be crossed, he said. "There may be issues with large-scale production, distribution may be an issue with the number of vaccines needed, something that is true for administration too."

"We also have to keep in mind that it takes time for

immunity to set in," Professor Krammer said. "Most of these vaccines have to be given twice and it may take two months by the time you are protected."

He added that longevity could be an issue too. "We do not yet know how long immunity will last, but it might be that booster doses after one, two or three years might be needed."

In terms of therapeutics, we still do not have "a silver bullet," he said. "We need new drugs to deal with the virus during the early phases of infection and deal with the immune system in the late stage of infection."

Benjamin R. tenOever, an Arthur and Irene Fishberg Professor of Medicine and the Director of the Virus Engineering Center for Therapeutics and Research (VECTOR) at the Icahn School of Medicine, Mount Sinai, New York, spoke on leveraging innate immunity as a first-line defence against SARS-CoV-2.