

Vaccine deal on table as Britain and EU defuse tensions



A vial of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. / PA

Britain is close to striking a vaccine deal with the European Union as soon as this weekend that will remove the threat of the bloc cutting off supplies, The Times has reported.

Under the agreement, the EU will remove its threat to ban the export of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines to Britain.

In return, the UK government will agree to forgo some long-term supplies of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine that had been due to be exported from Holland, the newspaper reported.

On Friday, the European Medicines Agency approved Halix production site in the Netherlands that makes the AstraZeneca vaccine and a facility in Marburg in Germany producing BioNTech/Pfizer shots.

The EU's clearing of the vaccine site comes as the union is banking on them to boost deliveries in the second quarter and accelerate the slow pace of inoculations in the bloc.

Europe's troubled vaccine rollout prompted the president of European Commission Ursula von der Leyen to block exports of the AstraZeneca jab.

She told Germany's Funke Media Group in an interview published Saturday that the EU had the "possibility" to ban exports. "This is a message to AstraZeneca: You fulfill your part of the deal toward Europe before you start to deliver to other countries," she said.

EU leaders claim Britain should share more, notably to help make up the shortfall in contracted deliveries of AstraZeneca shots.

But ministers have pointed out that the UK did a better job negotiating with manufacturers and arranging supply chains.

Brussels and London sought to cool tensions on Wednesday, declaring they were working "to create a win-win situation and expand vaccine supply for all our citizens".

Source: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/britain-eu-vaccines-b926593.html>

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