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**Cadila launches maiden indigenous H1N1 vaccine**

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New Delhi The day when the World Health Organisation refrained from downgrading H1N1 flu from its current pandemic status, India unveiled its first indigenous H1N1 vaccine.

The vaccine, developed by drug firm Cadila Healthcare, will provide immunity from the H1N1 virus strain for one year.

Launching the vaccine (Vaxiflu-S), Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad said, "Ever since WHO declared H1N1 a pandemic on June 11, 2009, our ministry had taken up the challenge to promote manufacture of the very first indigenous H1N1 vaccine in the shortest possible time."

Cadila chairman and managing director Pankaj Patel was the first person to take the vaccine followed by Azad. Besides Cadila, the Serum Institute of India, Bharat Biotech and Panacea Biotech are other pharma firms developing H1N1 vaccines.

The vaccine developed by the Serum Institute is likely to hit the market by the end of this month, while Bharat Biotech and Panacea are likely to launch their vaccine by July and August. Meanwhile, WHO director-general Margaret Chan announced on Thursday that it remained critical for countries to maintain vigilance concerning the pandemic, including necessary public health measures for disease control and surveillance.

Chan said that pandemic

flu activity was expected to continue and the committee would meet again by mid-July to review the status of the outbreak once more data from the winter influenza season in the southern hemisphere was available.