



AS IT IS

Tech Companies Buy COVID-19 Vaccines for Taiwan

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Taiwan's Foxconn and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) said on Monday they had agreed to buy 10 million **doses** of Germany's BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The total cost of the deal is reported to be about \$350 million.

Taiwan's government has tried for months to buy the vaccine directly from BioNTech. The government of Taiwan has blamed mainland China for barring an agreement it was supposed to sign with the company earlier this year.

China denies that it blocked the vaccine sale. Mainland China claims the self-ruled island as its own territory.

BioNTech's sales agent in mainland China, Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical Group, said Sunday that an agreement had been signed. But it did not give details of when the vaccines would be provided.

Terry Gou is the chairman of Foxconn. Gou wrote on his Facebook page that he was thankful the deal had been completed. Foxconn and TSMC will each buy 5 million doses. Foxconn will buy its vaccines through the YongLin Foundation. The doses will be donated to the government which will then supply them to medical services.

Gou said, "But we can't **relax**, because we will continue to work hard to push for the **delivery** time and quantity."

Taiwan's government agreed to permit the technology companies to negotiate for the vaccines because of public pressure about its vaccine program.

Taiwan's Cabinet said the vaccines would be donated at no cost to the government.

Cabinet spokesperson Lo Ping-cheng said BioNTech signed the contract on Sunday. He said that the government was already looking to buy more from both AstraZeneca and Moderna. Taiwan wants to buy 15 million "next generation" vaccines from Moderna for 2022 and 2023.

The United States and Japan have together donated almost 5 million doses to the island to help speed up vaccinations.

Vaccine drama in Taiwan

The issue of BioNTech vaccines has caught the interest of people and the media in Taiwan. The coronavirus outbreak in Taiwan is largely under control. But only about one tenth of its 23.5 million people have received at least one **shot** of a two-shot vaccine.

TSMC and Foxconn are both major suppliers for the American computer company Apple. The Taiwanese companies said in a joint statement that they do not think the first BioNTech vaccines will arrive before late September. They will come directly from Germany.

Gou said the government in Beijing did not affect the talks.

BioNTech also confirmed the deal but used the term "Taiwan region," using the wording called for by China's government. That wording does not suggest the island is a separate country.

A person who knows about the talks told Reuters the involvement of TSMC and the unconditional U.S. and Japanese vaccine donations made it hard for China to stop the deal.

I'm Jill Robbins.

Ben Blanchard and Yimou Lee wrote this story for Reuters. Jill Robbins adapted it for Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

dose – *n.* the amount of a medicine, drug, or vitamin that is taken at one time

relax –*v.* to permit something to become weaker, to reduce attention

delivery –*n.* the act of taking something to a person or place

shot – *n.* an act of putting something (such as medicine or vaccine) into the body with a needle

What do you think of this action by the tech companies? We want to hear from you. Write to us in the Comments Section.
