

Thailand to start Covid-19 vaccinations from Feb 14

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Dhaka: The government of Thailand plans to begin its national vaccine rollout from February 14, starting with healthcare and front-line workers, according to the Public Health Ministry.

As vaccine availability remains limited, target groups with higher infection risks will be administered the shots during the first of a three-phased rollout plan, permanent secretary of public health Kiattiphum Wongrajit said on January 25.

"We will start with medical personnel and high-risk individuals and areas," senior health official Sopon Mekton said.

Health workers in Samut Sakhon province, the epicenter of the latest outbreak, would be the first to be inoculated, then elderly and people with chronic diseases.

Thailand's Food and Drug Administration last week approved AstraZeneca's vaccine for emergency use and is expected to receive 50,000 doses next month from the British-Swedish firm. It has yet to grant authorization for that of Sinovac Biotech, of which the government has ordered two million doses.

Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul on Monday said AstraZeneca would be supplying

50,000 fewer doses of the vaccine than the 200,000 ordered.

"With the orders, they have at hand, they just confirmed to us, they would supply 150,000 doses," Mr. Anutin told reporters, without elaborating, adding the government had initially requested one million doses.

The government has been criticized for taking too long to procure vaccines while neighbors in Southeast Asia start vaccinations or race to secure supplies from multiple companies. The government has rejected the criticism.

Former Future Forward leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit has said the strategy relied too much on one company, Siam Bioscience, a firm under the holdings of His Majesty the King, which will manufacture the AstraZeneca vaccine locally for regional distribution.

Two leaders of the anti-government protest movement held a small demonstration on Monday to protest what they said was preferential treatment for the Siam Bioscience.

The government aims to inoculate at least 50 percent of the population before the end of 2021. Other details of the inoculation program are: in the second phase, from May to December, the vaccination program will be expanded to all regions; and in the final phase, from January 2022 onward, there will be enough vaccines to distribute to the entire population to create herd immunity.

Vaccines will be provided free of charge and will not be compulsory, said Anutin.

The government will launch a platform called 'Mor Prom' or 'Doctor's Ready' to facilitate its vaccination program; users can make appointments for the shots and health authorities can monitor any adverse effects.

[Covid-19 vaccination in Bangladesh is all set for inauguration on January 27.](#)