Jordan launches COVID vaccination campaign

13 January 2021

Jordan launched a COVID-19 vaccination campaign on Wednesday, beginning with jabs for healthcare workers, people with chronic illnesses and those over the age of 60.

The kingdom said on Saturday that it had granted an "emergency licence" for the use of China's Sinopharm vaccine, the second vaccine it approved after the US-German Pfizer-BioNTech.

The first injections were given at hospitals and other healthcare facilities, after the authorities designated 29 vaccination centres across Jordan, including seven in the capital Amman.

Wael Hayajneh, head of the epidemics and communicable diseases department at the health ministry, said Jordan was among the "first 40 countries" to vaccinate against the novel coronavirus.

"I advise everyone to take the vaccine as it is the only trusted solution to end the coronavirus," Doctor Etimad al-Khawaja told AFP after getting a shot.

"The health situation in Jordan will not get better unless we all get vaccinated."

In a small sign of hope, Jordan's prime minister said Wednesday that restrictions including a Friday curfew would be gradually eased from this week and that schools would reopen from February, following a fall in infection rates in recent weeks.

"The government will work to reopen different sectors in a careful way that protects citizens and the national economy," Bisher al-Khasawneh told lawmakers.

The government says its priority is to give the vaccines—which are free for Jordanians and foreign residents—to about a quarter of the country's 10 million inhabitants.

Health Minister Natheer Obeidat expressed hope that everyone would register and get innoculated.

"The vaccination process... targets the elderly, people with chronic diseases, and medical staff in the first stage, but our overall goal is to reach and vaccinate the largest number of citizens" possible, he told state television.

Jordan has recorded 310,000 cases of COVID-19 infection and more than 4,000 deaths. It has detected five cases of a more contagious variant first identified in England.

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