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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

5K Moscow Teachers, Doctors Sign Up for Coronavirus Vaccination on First Day

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Mass vaccination for high-risk groups with the Sputnik V jab is expected to start in Moscow on Saturday.
Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency

Moscow's teachers, doctors and social workers are signing up at a rate of 1,000 per hour for the Russian capital's coronavirus vaccination drive that kicks off Saturday, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin has said.

Online vaccination bookings for high-risk groups opened in the Russian capital Friday after President Vladimir Putin ordered large-scale nationwide immunization — hours after Britain became the first western country to approve Pfizer-BioNTech's Covid-19 for general use — to start late next week.

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"In the first five hours, 5,000 people signed up for inoculation," the mayor wrote on his website 24 hours before vaccination centers are expected to open.

“These are teachers, doctors, social workers, those who risk their health and life the most.”

Authorities, who estimate that over 100,000 Russians at higher risk of Covid-19 have already received the Russian-made Sputnik V jab, have said the nationwide vaccination program would be free and voluntary.

Putin has said that around 2 million Sputnik V vaccine doses have either already been produced or will be manufactured in the coming days.

The two-dose jab is still undergoing the final phase of clinical trials for safety and efficacy among 40,000 volunteers. Its developers, who received government approval in August, say interim results of Phase 3 trials show Sputnik V to be 95% effective.

“The complex Covid-19 vaccination process has been put in motion,” Sobyanin said in his short message Friday.

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