The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Slovakia to Start Sputnik Jabs in June

By AFP

May 12, 2021

Slovakia's health minister said Wednesday that the EU member would start offering Russia's Sputnik V vaccine in June, months after Bratislava's purchase of the coronavirus jabs triggered a government crisis.

The announcement comes a day after the health ministry said it would suspend first doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine as it investigates a fatal blood clot in a patient who received the jab.

"Within days, I will sign the consent for vaccination with Sputnik V," Slovak Health Minister Vladimir Lengvarsky told reporters.

He added that Slovaks between the ages of 18 and 60 would be able to choose Sputnik from among the available vaccines starting June 1.

Sputnik V has sown division among former Eastern Bloc countries, with some seeing it as a godsend and others as a Kremlin propaganda tool.

The Lancet medical journal published a report in February that found Sputnik V to be over 90

percent effective against symptomatic Covid-19, allaying transparency concerns over the jab used in Russia and Hungary.

But the vaccine has not received a green light from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) for use in the European Union.

Slovakia received its first shipment of Sputnik V vaccines on March 1.

The decision by then prime minister Igor Matovic to purchase the jabs proved divisive, with the former foreign minister calling them "a hybrid war tool".

Three members of the four-party ruling coalition were against the purchase, which eventually led Matovic and his health minister Marek Krajci to resign.

A reconstructed government, headed by Eduard Heger, was appointed on April 1. Apart from Heger, the only new member of the government is Lengvarsky.

Since then, the first batch of Sputnik doses has been evaluated by two independent Slovak laboratories, as well as a certified laboratory in Hungary. Samples of the vaccine were also sent back to Russia for evaluation.

Lengvarsky decided to approve the vaccine after the results proved satisfactory.

A central European country of 5.4 million people, Slovakia has registered a total 386,540 cases of Covid-19 as of Wednesday, including 12,096 deaths.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/05/12/slovakia-to-start-sputnik-jabs-in-june-a73875