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Moscow Announces Car Raffle to Boost Vaccination Drive

By AFP

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Moscow has set up vaccination centers in shopping malls and across the capital's parks. **Artyom Geodakyan/TASS**

Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said Sunday that residents of the Russian capital who get their first coronavirus jab will now take part in a lottery to win a car.

The move comes as authorities seek to speed up Russia's vaccination drive that has stagnated while new infections in Moscow and across the country are on the rise.

"From June 14 until July 11, 2021, citizens who get their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine will become participants in a car lottery," Sobyanin announced on his website.

Every week five cars will be raffled out, each worth around 1 million rubles ($13,900).

"But of course the main gain for those who get vaccinated cannot be compared to any car — it is their own health and peace of mind," Sobyanin said.

The mayor — who was vaccinated with Russia's Sputnik V in May last year — added that two days ago he got a booster jab and "feels well."

Sobyanin sounded the alarm over the spike in cases earlier this week and announced the reopening of field hospitals and introduced a "non-working" week until June 20.

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All non-essential workers will be out of office but will retain their salary. However, they have not been ordered to stay at home.

The mayor also reintroduced a curfew for bars and restaurants that bans them from serving customers between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

A government tally reported 7,704 new virus cases in Moscow on Sunday, a six-month high.

Despite introducing a strict lockdown after the pandemic swept across Russia last spring, authorities lifted most restrictions by mid-summer in an effort to protect the struggling economy.

Russia started its mass vaccination campaign in December, with the homegrown vaccine Sputnik V — touted by Russian President Vladimir Putin as the best in the world — that is free and widely available in Moscow.

Since the registration of Sputnik V in August, Russia has approved three more vaccines for public use — EpiVacCorona, CoviVac and the one-dose Sputnik Light.

Foreign-made vaccines are not available in Russia.

So far, 18 million people or 12% of the population has received at least one dose of a vaccine with polls showing that a majority of Russians do not plan to get immunized.

The Kremlin said Putin was vaccinated against the coronavirus in private but did not reveal which jab he used.

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