

Kazakhstan begins using Russian vaccine against coronavirus

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Kazakhstan began its coronavirus vaccination campaign Monday with top health officials receiving Russia's Sputnik V vaccine.

The ministry said that the first delivery of 22,000 doses of Sputnik V had arrived and would be distributed across the country of around 18.5 million.

Deputy health minister Erlan Kiyasov said he didn't "feel any sort of discomfort" after the Monday morning injection, witnessed by a pack of journalists.

"If we can get more than 50 percent of the population to immunity, we can finally return to a normal society without restrictions, without lockdowns," he said.

Kiyasov and fellow deputy health minister Azhar Giniyat will receive follow-up shots of the vaccine in 21 days, the ministry said Sunday.

Vaccinations with Kazakhstan's national vaccine, known as QazCovid-in and currently in third stage trials, are expected to begin sometime in March.

Kazakhstan is the first country in former Soviet Central Asia to roll out Sputnik V.

Neighbouring Turkmenistan has registered the Russian-made vaccine but has not announced the beginning of inoculations.

Uzbekistan, Central Asia's most populous country with around 34 million people, placed an order for up to 35 million doses of Sputnik V in September.

Russia registered the jab—named after the Soviet-era satellite—in August last year, before the start of large-scale clinical trials, leaving some experts wary.

Sputnik V's developers have since said the [vaccine](#) is more than 90 percent effective and several foreign countries have begun administering it.

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