

Thailand gov't negotiating to buy Pfizer coronavirus vaccine

April 20 2021



Buddhist monks wear face masks to protect themselves from the coronavirus during a morning alms offerings at Marble Temple in Bangkok, Thailand Friday, April 16, 2021. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, under intense criticism for failing to secure adequate supplies of coronavirus vaccines, said Tuesday

his government is negotiating to buy 5 million to 10 million doses from U.S. pharmaceutical company Pfizer.

Thailand is experiencing a new wave of the coronavirus, with the number of daily new cases surpassing 1,000 this month for the first time. Health officials on Tuesday announced 1,443 new cases and four new fatalities, bring the totals to 45,185 cases and 108 deaths.

The surge of cases has strained the ability of hospitals to supply rooms for COVID-19 patients, but the government says new field hospitals should provide enough capacity. Thailand has a policy of hospitalizing all people who test positive for the virus.

Concern has been heightened because many of the new cases, traced to nightspots in and around Bangkok, are from the more contagious B.1.1.7 variant first identified in Britain.

Prayuth told reporters that the National Vaccine Institute is negotiating with Pfizer over the price and other conditions for the supply of 5 million to 10 million doses, with delivery to start in July and be completed by December.

His government has been widely criticized for making late and inadequate efforts to secure [vaccine supplies](#), which so far include delivery of only about 2 million doses of AstraZeneca and Chinese Sinovac vaccines. As of Monday, just under 1% of Thailand's 69 million people had received at least one vaccine dose.



In this April 12, 2021, file photo, Thai workers prepare a field hospital for COVID-19 patients in Bangkok, Thailand. The country had seemed to be a virus success story and was just beginning to relax border quarantine requirements when a new outbreak involving nightspots in the capital took numbers of new infections to their highest levels ever. The setback suggests that Thailand may have been lulled into a false sense of security. (AP Photo/Somchai Chanjirakitti, File)



Office workers wearing face masks to help curb the spread of the coronavirus walk to work at Saen Saep pier in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, April 16, 2021. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

The government originally planned to secure 63 million doses this year, most of which would be the AstraZeneca vaccine, with local production slated to begin in June.

Prayuth said 500,000 more doses of the Sinovac [vaccine](#) are to arrive in Thailand on Saturday.

Thailand kept the [coronavirus](#) in check for most of last year, when it reported about 7,000 cases including 63 deaths. Lockdowns and curfews were imposed for several months and the country was shut to foreign

tourists, which had a tremendous economic cost.

Prayuth's [government](#) has not taken such severe measures during the current outbreak, fearing more damage to businesses.

However, provinces are allowed to impose their own restrictions. The Interior Ministry said 47 provinces have ordered 14-day quarantines for arriving travelers.

Starting Wednesday, the popular southern resort province of Phuket will require visitors to be fully vaccinated before arrival or have certificates that they are not infected. Without such certification, they must undergo a test on arrival.

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