Thai campaign to vaccinate schoolchildren makes progress

September 21 2021, by Tassanee Vejpongsa

A mother tries to comfort her child before receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at a hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2021. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration started inoculated 12-18 year old students Tuesday as part of its attempt to reopen on-site schools. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

Health officials in the Thai capital made headway Tuesday in their effort to vaccinate children against the coronavirus, giving shots of the Pfizer vaccine to students aged 12 to 18 with underlying diseases.

Vaccinations for that age bracket were first offered last month through hospitals, but now are arranged by schools. A separate campaign by a medical research institute on Monday began inoculating children aged 10 to 18 with China's Sinopharm vaccine.

On Tuesday, 1,500 students received shots of the Pfizer vaccine, 800 for the first time and 700 as a follow-up to their first shot in August.

Bangkok officials have asked the Health Ministry to provide more Pfizer vaccine to inoculate all children aged 12 to 18 in the capital city, said city Gov. Aswin Kwanmuang.

Many schools have been closed for onsite learning since last December, and Aswin said he does not want to allow them to reopen until 70% of a total of more than 1 million students are vaccinated. He hopes to reach that goal in November if adequate vaccine supplies are available.

The Health Ministry plans to give Pfizer shots to students aged 12 to 18 nationwide from Oct. 4, starting with the 29 provinces most badly affected by the coronavirus, including Bangkok.

Health workers administer doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at a hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2021. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration inoculated 12-18 year old students Tuesday as part of its attempt to reopen on-site schools. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

A mother comforts her child receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at a hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2021. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration inoculated 12-18 year old students Tuesday as part of its attempt to reopen on-site schools. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

A mother tries to comfort her son refusing to get the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at a hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2021. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration inoculated 12-18 year old students on Tuesday as part of its attempt to reopen on-site schools. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

Students wait to be sure of no side effects after receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at a hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2021. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration inoculated 12-18 year old students on Tuesday as part of its attempt to reopen on-site schools. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

Bangkok has been the worst hit province since another wave of the pandemic began in April this year. Nearly one-quarter of Thailand's more than 1.4 million COVID-19 cases confirmed since the pandemic began last year were found in Bangkok.

According to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 97.5% of Bangkok's 7.69 million people have received at least the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 41.6% are fully

vaccinated.

The Health Ministry on Tuesday announced 10,919 new COVID-19 cases and 143 deaths, bringing the totals since last year to 1.5 million cases and 15,612 deaths.