

[NCOC finalises vaccine procurement recommendations](#)

[Ikram Junaidi](#) Updated 01 Dec 2020

- **Number of Covid-19 deaths surpasses 8,000 • 5,082 smart lockdowns in place across country**
- **Over 7,000 volunteers administered Chinese vaccine during clinical trial**

ISLAMABAD: As the number of deaths has surpassed 8,000 and Chinese Covid-19 vaccine, which is being used for clinical trial in Pakistan, may not be available for the next few months, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Monday finalised recommendations for procurement of the vaccine from alternative channels at the earliest.

The recommendations will be presented before the federal in a meeting on Tuesday (today) for approval.

Moreover, a complete lockdown has been imposed in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) till Dec 6 and 5,082 smart lockdowns are in place across the country.

“NCOC today finalised its recommendations for procurement of Covid vaccine. These will be presented to the cabinet tomorrow for approval. The taskforce of experts headed by SAPM health Dr Faisal Sultan had developed the recommendations which were discussed and finalised today,” Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar tweeted.

A senior official at the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS), requesting anonymity, said different options had been discussed for the last four months. “However, unfortunately every time process was derailed due to different reasons such as side effects of the vaccines, which vaccine will be available earlier, etc. So different options were considered and reviewed at the same time,” he added.

“As we speak, it is expected that at least two vaccines will be registered, somewhere in the world, in December. We have to make arrangements to get the vaccine at the earliest. Moreover, it has been decided that the vaccine will be given to healthcare workers, senior citizens and people suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, etc, on a priority basis,” he said.

In reply to a question, the official said the shelf price of Pfizer’s vaccine was \$20 each and two shots of the vaccine would be given to each person. He said the vaccine developed by Astrazeneca would be available for \$4 per doze so \$8 would be required to vaccinate one person.

“However, the vaccine’s shelf price can be negotiated with the companies. Price depends on the quantity we want and available stock. I believe that the price can be reduced if we give order at the earliest or if we let others buy first and stand at the end of the queue,” he added.

It is worth mentioning that Prime Minister Imran Khan had on Nov 17 approved allocation of \$100 million and making advance payment for procurement of the vaccine at the earliest.

Vice Chancellor of University of Health Sciences Prof Dr Javed Akram, while talking to Dawn, said that over 7,000 volunteers had been administered Chinese vaccine during clinical trial in Pakistan, but it might take a few months to complete the trial as second shot of the vaccine had to be given to those volunteers.

“Production of vaccine in Pakistan is not possible as the country lacks biotechnology plant. I believe it may take six months to one year to get Chinese vaccine. Once we get the vaccine it will be given to most exposed persons such as healthcare workers, senior citizens, officials of law enforcement agencies, etc,” he said.

Over 2m people under lockdowns

A meeting of the NCOC was informed that there was a complete lockdown in AJK till Dec 6 and 5,082 smart lockdowns were in place across the country — 1,459 in Punjab, 206 in Sindh, 182 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 3205 in Islamabad Capital Territory and 30 in Gilgit-Baltistan — due to which 2,058,746 people were under lockdowns.

The average national positivity ratio was 8.53 per cent. The highest ratio was observed in Mirpur 27.75pc, followed by 23.44pc in Muzaffarabad and 18.21pc in Hyderabad. The positivity ratio was 21.3pc in AJK, 11.95pc in Balochistan, 3.43pc in GB, 6.62pc in Islamabad, 5.57pc in KP, 4.84pc in Punjab and 14.04pc Sindh.

As many as 2,046 Covid-19 patients were in critical condition across the country and the number is rising.

The NCOC was told that 2,839 people tested positive for Covid-19 and 40 people lost lives in a single day. Total active cases reached 48,576 and out of the 1,757 ventilators allocated for Covid-19 patients, 300 ventilators were occupied on Monday. The number of deaths has so far reached 8,025.

Meanwhile, general secretary of the Pakistan Medical Association Dr Qaisar Sajjad went into isolation after testing positive for Covid-19. Talking to Dawn, he said the people, who got infected with the virus, should take rest and don't do any exercise in the room as it could have drastic effects on health. He suggested that the patients should drink a lot of water and eat nuts and dried fruits to boost their immunity level.

Published in Dawn, December 1st, 2020

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1593369>