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Sputnik V vaccine makes debut in Mumbai as part of pilot project

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MUMBAI: The Russian vaccine Sputnik V has made its debut in the city this week. It has been administered to 667 people over the past two days as part of a pilot project carried out at Ashirwad Heart Hospital in Ghatkopar east.

It may be a few weeks before Sputnik is available for everyone. Dr Reddy's Laboratories had started inoculation with Sputnik V as part of a soft launch after it obtained clearance in April for emergency use. The first dose of the vaccine was administered in Hyderabad on 14 May under a pilot.

Civic officials said that people cannot book slots for Sputnik on Co-win yet.

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A spokesperson from Dr Reddy's said this was a pilot programme and not the full commercial launch.

"It is a limited launch involving small numbers to test our cold storage arrangements (since Sputnik V requires -18C storage), CoWin integration, track-and-trace and logistical arrangements," said the spokesperson. The commercial launch of the vaccine is expected to commence later in June.

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This pilot launch that started in Hyderabad has now been scaled up and extended to Visakhapatnam, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata.

The company said that other cities will follow shortly.

“As it is a limited launch right now, members of the public cannot register for the Sputnik V via the usual portals/apps. This will become possible at the time of full launch later in June,” the company told TOI.

Dr Mahendra Khandade, medical officer of health of N ward, said that the doses are being given to people chosen by the company along with doctors from Ashirwad Hospital.

Authorities from Ashirwad didn't wish to comment on the project. It is not clear if other hospitals too are a part of the pilot in the city.

Developed by the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology in Russia, the vaccine has an efficacy of over 91%.

The vaccine is priced at Rs 995 with GST, the second highest in the country. The Centre has capped its cost for private vaccination centres at Rs 1,145.