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Duterte wants entire Philippine population vaccinated for COVID-19

Reuters Staff

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FILE PHOTO: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte gestures during his fourth State of the Nation Address at the Philippine Congress in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines July 22, 2019. REUTERS/Eloisa Lopez

MANILA (Reuters) - Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said on Wednesday his government has the money to procure coronavirus vaccines but he would need more as he wants to inoculate the country's entire population.

The government aims to get vaccines to all Filipinos, which Duterte said now number around 113 million, but priority will be given to the poor, the police and military personnel.

"All should have the vaccine without exception," Duterte said in a late-night televised address.

The firebrand leader repeated that he prefers COVID-19 vaccine supplies to come from either Russia or China. Both have submitted applications to conduct clinical trials for their inoculations in the Philippines.

"For me, either China or Russia, I am ok," Duterte said.

Apart from China's Sinovac Biotech and Russia's Gamaleya

Research Institute, the Philippines is also evaluating Johnson & Johnson's Janssen unit's application to conduct Phase 3 trials of its COVID-19 vaccine.

It has had talks with other potential vaccine suppliers, including U.S. drugmaker Pfizer Inc and Moderna Inc.

The Philippines recorded 1,910 new coronavirus infections on Wednesday, and 78 more fatalities, bringing the total in the country to 346,536 cases, the highest in Southeast Asia, and 6,449 deaths.

It has been gradually reopening the economy to allow more businesses to resume operations and more people to go back to work, but partial restrictions in and around the capital Manila remain to keep the virus spread in check.

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