

# SA secures 30-million J&J Covid-19 shots

South Africa has secured 30-million Johnson and Johnson (J&J) Covid-19 vaccines, the first batch of which will be delivered in April.



Photo: Aspen Pharmacare

President Cyril Ramaphosa was visiting the R30bn Aspen Pharmacare sterile manufacturing facility where millions of vaccines shots are produced at Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, when the announcement was made. “As you well know, we’ve got a multi-supplier system of acquiring vaccines, Johnson & Johnson is one of those that we’re buying vaccines from and there are a number of others.”

He stressed that the country will not be overpaying for the vaccines acquired from J&J and other suppliers. “There is a great competition around the world about acquiring vaccines and we’re focused more to say, we’ve got to acquire vaccines as quickly as possible so that we can save our people’s lives.”

## Global shortage

He also shot down criticism around the slow pace of the country’s Covid-19 vaccine rollout, which he attributed to the global shortage of vaccines.

This was not unique to South Africa, Ramaphosa said, citing Japan and some other European and African countries, which

started their programme later than expected. “You will remember that we acquired vaccines initially from India and through scientific processes they were not efficient for the variant that we have and we have to source other vaccines.”

The president said he hoped the visit to the pharmaceutical plant would speed up production, while he said government is still waiting for the Pfizer jabs. “People tend to think we’ve lost time, we’ve lost a bit of time but we still on target in terms of our phase and we’re now going to speed up the whole process of getting these. So, losing doesn’t mean in my book that government is failing.”

Aspen Pharmacare collaborated with J&J to establish the capacity required for the manufacturing of the vaccine at Eastern Cape plant. The facility packages these products into vials, ampoules and pre-filled syringes. Aspen has invested more than R3bn in the facility, which will further provide lifesaving medicines for the domestic and export markets.

## **Third wave**

The National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) is meeting today (30 March) to discuss the potential of a third wave being sparked by the Easter long weekend. “We should be able to also discuss the matter with our provinces... they will tell us how we’re behaving in relation to whether we’re observing various protocols or not.”

Therefore, a decision will be taken once they have received reports from all the provinces.

“If we find that our people are not observing the protocols and there are fears that there could be a further surge, then we’d have to re-examine our position and say, do we need further restrictions,” the president said.

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