

Japanese donation of vaccines arrives

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The text “Taiwan loves Japan” is displayed on Taipei 101 yesterday after Japan sent Taiwan with 1.24 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which arrived in Taiwan yesterday.

Photo: George Tsorng, Taipei Times

A shipment of 1.24 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine from Japan yesterday arrived in Taiwan, with the flight reportedly accompanied by a US military aircraft, while Washington announced its plan to share vaccine doses with allies, including Taiwan.

It is the largest amount of vaccine doses received by Taiwan in a single shipment, Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中) told a daily news briefing at the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) in Taipei.

The doses would be effective through Oct. 14, Chen said.

Chen thanked Japan for offering Taiwan timely help, instead of sending the doses to COVAX, the global vaccine sharing program.

It would take more time to acquire vaccines through the platform, he said.

Chen, who heads the CECC, said the center two days ago had received Japan’s technical documentation for the doses, which would help hasten its examination process, adding that health personnel would inspect the doses before supplying them to the public.

The tranche, transported by Japan Airlines Flight JL809, departed from Tokyo’s Narita International Airport at 11am and landed at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport at about 2pm.

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Originally a regular passenger flight between Tokyo and Taoyuan, the flight was canceled to transport the vaccine doses.

Before its departure, Representative to Japan Frank Hsieh (謝國興) shared on Facebook several photographs of airport personnel loading boxes in heavy rain, including a photo of Hsieh in a raincoat bowing to the plane.

The deal was reached through the efforts of Hsieh and Joseph Young, charge d'affaires ad interim at the US embassy in Tokyo, who met on Monday last week, as well as former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Wang Ting-yu (王亭瑜) said, echoing a similar account from Japan's *Sankei Shimbun*.

"Taiwan always accompanies Japan through pain or agony," Japanese Representative to Taiwan Hiroyasu Izumi said in a statement in Mandarin.

While both countries struggle amid COVID-19 outbreaks, Japanese sincerely hope to support Taiwanese to repay their aid in the wake of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and at the onset of the pandemic last year, when Taiwan donated 2 million masks and other medical supplies to Japan, he said.

Japan's timely aid to Taiwan on the 32nd anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre boosts the nation's confidence in its democracy, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) wrote on Facebook.

The White House on Thursday detailed its plan to distribute 25 million vaccine doses, the first of 80 million it plans to share worldwide by the end of the month.

White House COVID-19 response coordinator Jeff Zients said that the first tranche would be comprised of a combination of three vaccines that have US emergency use authorization: Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech.

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Nearly 19 million doses would be shared through COVAX, including 7 million allocated for Asia, including Taiwan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, it said, without specifying the amount to each nation.

About 6 million doses are allocated to nations in South and Central America and the Caribbean, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti and Peru.

Five million are reserved for Africa and would be distributed in coordination with the African Union, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said.

“But ultimately, the United States will have the authority to say the doses are going here as opposed to there,” he added.

US President Joe Biden said that the remaining 6 million doses of the initial donation would be shared directly with countries experiencing surges or that are in crisis, as well as with partners and neighbors such as Canada, Mexico and South Korea.

Sullivan said that the US wants to “retain some flexibility” about allocating doses outside COVAX as necessary.

The American Institute in Taiwan did not say how many of the doses earmarked for Asia would go to Taiwan, but said that further details on the deliveries would be forthcoming.

“The American people will never forget Taiwan’s generosity in providing face masks and other emergency supplies during the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis in the United States,” it said in a statement.

Tsai is grateful that the US would make the donation as Taiwan faces its worst outbreak, Presidential Office spokesperson Xavier Chang (蔡清賢) said yesterday.

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The Australian Office in Taipei yesterday posted on social media a video clip showing Australian Representative to Taiwan Jenny Bloomfield and other office staff “clapping for Taiwan.”

“All of us at the Australian Office thank Taiwan’s health and medical workers and everyone on the front line working tirelessly to keep us safe. Taiwan *Jiayou* [加油],” the office wrote, using an expression of encouragement.

Additional reporting by CNA and AFP

Source: [Taipei Times - 2021/06/05](#)