

Most populous Brazil state aims to start vaccination Jan. 25

December 7 2020, by David Biller



Sao Paulo Gov. Joao Doria poses for photo flashing a thumbs up next to a container carrying the experimental COVID-19 vaccine CoronaVac after it was unloaded from a cargo plane that arrived from China at Guarulhos International Airport in Guarulhos, near Sao Paulo, Brazil, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020. (AP Photo/Andre Penner)

The governor of Brazil's Sao Paulo state said on Monday that vaccination against the coronavirus is slated to begin on Jan. 25.

"We're not turning our backs on the national vaccination plan, but we need to be more agile, and so we're anticipating," said Gov. João Doria, whose state is home to 46 million people. "Why start vaccination that saves the lives of millions only in March, if we can do it in January? We're losing more than 600 lives every day," he told reporters.

The potential CoronaVac vaccine is being developed by Chinese biopharmaceutical firm Sinovac and would be mostly produced by Sao Paulo's state-run Butantan Institute. It has yet to be approved by Brazil's health regulator, Anvisa.

Assuming CoronaVac is approved, the first phase of Sao Paulo's program would provide two shots free of charge to 9 million people, of whom 7.5 million are over 60 years old, according to Doria's presentation. The remaining 1.5 million are [health workers](#), members of Indigenous groups and people in communities descended from escaped slaves. Those four groups have accounted for about three-quarters of Sao Paulo's deaths since the start of the pandemic.

Doria is a political rival of Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly cast doubt on the potential effectiveness of CoronaVac. When trials were temporarily halted last month following a subject's [death](#), Bolsonaro claimed vindication; subsequent tests showed the apparent cause of death was a mixture of sedatives and alcohol, and trials resumed.

The [federal government](#) has a deal to get up to 100 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine candidate if it works.

"At this moment, the union of all should take priority over the

ideological war," Doria said. "In the fight for life, there is no space for denialism."

Brazil has confirmed 177,000 deaths from COVID-19, the second most of any country in the world. Sao Paulo, which itself has a population nearly as large as Spain's, has had 40,000 deaths.

Doria said that his government will also make 4 million CoronaVac vaccines available to other states.

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