

Indonesia starts mass COVID-19 vaccinations with president

January 13 2021, by Edna Tarigan and Victoria Milko



In this photo released by Indonesian Presidential Palace, President Joko Widodo, left, receives a shot of COVID-19 vaccine at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021. Widodo on Wednesday received the first shot of a Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccine after Indonesia approved it for emergency use and began efforts to vaccinate millions of people in the world's fourth most populated country. Writings on the banner in the background read "Safe and Halal." (Agus Suparto/Indonesian Presidential Palace via AP)

Indonesian President Joko Widodo on Wednesday received the first shot of a Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccine after Indonesia approved it for emergency use and began efforts to vaccinate millions of people in the world's fourth most populated country.

After Widodo, top military, police and medical officials were vaccinated, as well as the secretary of the Indonesian Ulema Council, the clerical body that last week ruled the [vaccine](#) was halal and could be taken by Muslims. Others such as a health care worker, businesspeople and a social media influencer also received the shots to encourage people to get the vaccine when it is available to them.

"We need to do the vaccination to stop the chain spread of COVID-19 and give [health protection](#) to us and the safety to all Indonesian people. It will also help accelerate economic improvement," Widodo said.

"This vaccine is the instrument we can use to protect us. But more importantly, the vaccine is the instrument to protect our family, our neighbor, Indonesian people and the [human civilization](#)," Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin said on Wednesday.

"This vaccine is given to achieve herd immunity. All 70% of the world's people must be vaccinated for that to be achieved. The participation of all Indonesians will greatly determine the success of this program," he said.



In this image made from a video released by Indonesian Presidential Palace, President Joko Widodo receives a shot of COVID-19 vaccine at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021. Widodo on Wednesday received the first shot of a Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccine after Indonesia approved it for emergency use and began efforts to vaccinate millions of people in the world's fourth most populated country. (Indonesian Presidential Palace via AP)

Conditional use of the Sinovac Biotech Ltd. vaccine is scheduled to be rolled out in the coming months with [health care workers](#), [civil servants](#) and other at-risk populations prioritized. It will be free for all Indonesian citizens.

For Indonesia to vaccinate two-thirds of its population, 181.5 million

people, Sadikin said the two-shot vaccine would require almost 427 million doses, including the estimate that 15% may be wasted.

Distribution will not be easy in the vast archipelago where transportation and infrastructure are limited in places. Health officials have cited concerns about keeping the vaccine refrigerated at the required 36–46 degrees Fahrenheit to maintain its safety and effectiveness.

"We know that the cold-chain distribution is not complete. This is the obstacle," Sadikin said Tuesday. "The cold-chain facilities are not enough so we are still distributing some of the vaccines. We are worried."



In this image made from a video released by Indonesian Presidential Palace, a

Health Ministry official shows a box of COVID-19 vaccine that will be given to President Joko Widodo at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021. Widodo on Wednesday received the first shot of a Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccine after Indonesia approved it for emergency use and began efforts to vaccinate millions of people in the world's fourth most populated country. (Indonesian Presidential Palace via AP)



Workers unload COVID-19 vaccines to be stored at a warehouse in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia, Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2021. Indonesia's Food and Drug Authority has green-lighted emergency use of the COVID-19 vaccine produced by China-based Sinovac Biotech Ltd., with vaccinations of high-risk groups expected to start later this week. (AP Photo/Septian)



In this image made from a video released by Indonesian Presidential Palace, President Joko Widodo, center, prepare to receive a shot of COVID-19 vaccine at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021. Widodo on Wednesday received the first shot of a Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccine after Indonesia approved it for emergency use and began efforts to vaccinate millions of people in the world's fourth most populated country. (Indonesian Presidential Palace via AP)



In this photo released by the Indonesian Presidential Palace, President Joko Widodo prepares to receive a shot of COVID-19 vaccine at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021. Widodo on Wednesday received the first shot of a Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccine after Indonesia approved it for emergency use and began efforts to vaccinate millions of people in the world's fourth most populated country. Writings on the banner in the background read "Vaccina, Safe and Halal." (Agus Suparto/Indonesian Presidential Palace via AP)



Workers carry a box of COVID-19 vaccines to be stored at a warehouse in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia, Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2021. Indonesia's Food and Drug Authority has green-lighted emergency use of the COVID-19 vaccine produced by China-based Sinovac Biotech Ltd., with vaccinations of high-risk groups expected to start later this week. (AP Photo/Septian)



In this photo released by the Indonesian Presidential Palace, workers unload a container containing experimental coronavirus vaccines made by the Chinese company Sinovac from the cargo bay of a Garuda Indonesia plane at the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Tangerang, Indonesia, Tuesday, Jan, 12, 2021. Indonesia's Food and Drug Authority has green-lighted emergency use of the COVID-19 vaccine produced by China-based Sinovac Biotech Ltd., with vaccinations of high-risk groups expected to start later this week. (Indonesian Presidential Palace via AP)



In this photo released by the Indonesian Presidential Palace, workers unload a container containing experimental coronavirus vaccines made by the Chinese company Sinovac from the cargo bay of a Garuda Indonesia plane at the

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Indonesia received its first shipment of the Sinovac vaccines on Dec. 6 and began distributing the doses around the country while awaiting emergency use authorization. It was cleared for emergency use based on clinical trial data and after the Indonesian Ulema Council declared the vaccine holy and halal.

Indonesia's vaccination program is the first large-scale use of the Sinovac vaccine outside of China.

Indonesia has recorded more than 846,000 cases of the virus, including over 24,600 deaths.

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Citation: Indonesia starts mass COVID-19 vaccinations with president (2021, January 13)
retrieved 8 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-01-indonesia-mass-covid-vaccinations.html>

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