

Colombia gets first shipment of coronavirus vaccines

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Preschool students wear masks to prevent the spread of new coronavirus as they line up to begin their first day back to in-person class in Bogota, Colombia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. Bogota is returning students to blended classes at public schools after a year of online education due to the pandemic. (AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)

Colombia received its first shipment of coronavirus vaccines on Monday and will soon begin to vaccinate its population of 50 million people, the third largest in Latin America.

The government says it aims to vaccinate 35 million people this year including hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants and refugees who are currently living in the country.

A yellow DHL plane carrying Colombia's first 50,000 vaccines arrived at Bogota's international airport and was welcomed personally by President Ivan Duque and his health minister. The shots were supplied by Pfizer, which has a contract to sell 10 million vaccines to Colombia.

"Today I want to thank God, I want to thank science" Duque said from a podium set up on the runway. "We will now walk forward with the "v" of

vaccines. With the "v" of victory."

Colombia will be one of the last countries in Latin America to start vaccinations. Neighboring countries like Ecuador and Panama began vaccinating their populations in January and Chile has already administered 1.9 million shots to its [population](#) of about 20 million.

President Duque had come under criticism for not obtaining vaccines sooner, but said that he preferred to start rolling out the shots when Colombia could secure a steady supply.

Government officials say that more than 1.6 million vaccines from various laboratories will soon arrive.



A teacher welcomes preschool students back to school on their first day back to in-person class amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Bogota, Colombia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. Bogota is returning students to blended classes at public schools after a year of online education due to the pandemic. (AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)



A teacher gives anti-bacterial gel to a preschool student on the first day back to in-person class amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Bogota, Colombia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. Bogota is returning students to blended classes at public schools after a year of online education due to the pandemic. (AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)



Preschool students wear masks and social distance to prevent the spread of new coronavirus as they begin their first day back to in-person class in Bogota, Colombia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. Bogota is returning students to blended classes at public schools after a year of online education due to the pandemic. (AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)



A preschool student wearing a mask is guided by a teacher as he washes his hands to prevent the spread of new coronavirus upon arrival for the first day back to in-person class in Bogota, Colombia, Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. Bogota is returning students to blended classes at public schools after a year of online education due to the pandemic. (AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)

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