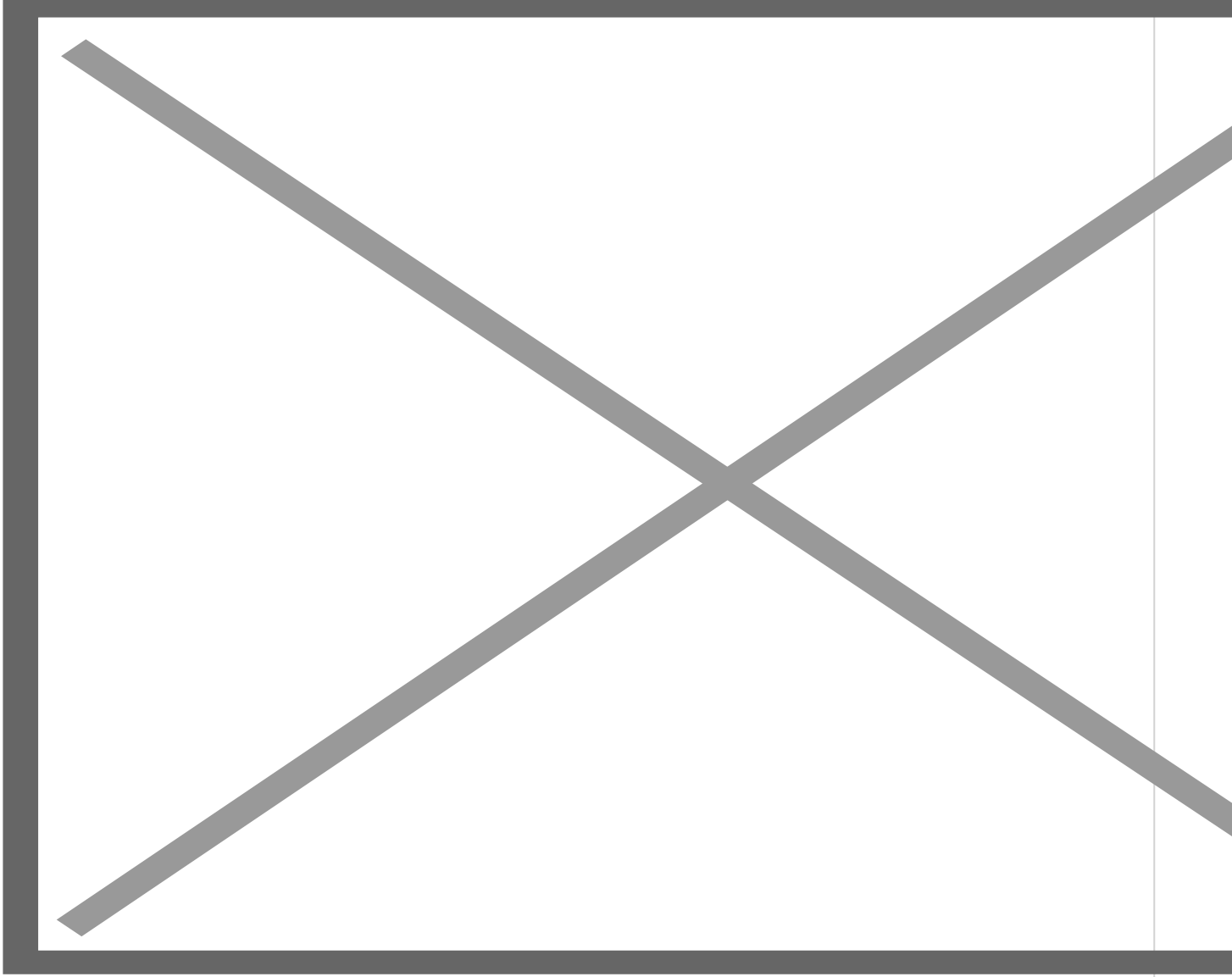


COVAX to send millions of AstraZeneca shots to Latin America

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A demonstrator holds a banner reading "vaccine now" during a rally demanding vaccines in Brasilia. (Photo: Adriano Machado/Reuters)

Geneva, February 3 (RHC)-- The COVAX global vaccine sharing scheme expects to deliver 35.3 million doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine to 36 Caribbean and Latin American states from mid-February to the end of June, the World Health Organization's regional office said.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said the Americas region needed to immunise about 500 million people to control the pandemic. "The number of doses and delivery schedule are still subject to EUL and manufacturing production capacity," PAHO said, adding that supply deals also had to be agreed with producers.

Of the 36 nations receiving AstraZeneca's shot, it said four countries, namely Bolivia, Colombia, El Salvador and Peru, would also receive a total of 377,910 doses of the PfizerBioNTech vaccine from mid-February. The GAVI alliance, the group that co-leads COVAX with WHO, said last week it aimed to deliver 2.3 billion vaccines worldwide by the end of 2021, including 1.8 billion free doses to lower-income countries.

Geneva-based GAVI will soon publish details of its allocations by country. The 36 Caribbean and Latin American nations to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine ranged from regional giants Brazil and Mexico to small islands such as Dominica and Montserrat.

Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said that the country plans to import an additional 870,000 doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine from India in February, as well as producing it locally.

Mexico and Argentina have a deal with AstraZeneca to produce its vaccine for distribution in Latin America, with financial support from the foundation of Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim. Meanwhile, deliveries of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to Mexico would "very probably" resume on February 10, Lopez Obrador said, after global delivery delays by the US company. Mexico was expecting about 1.5 million doses from Pfizer, he noted.

Brazil's Sao Paulo state is expecting to receive on Wednesday ingredients from Sinovac Biotech that will allow local production of 8.6 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine, the state government said in a statement. The ingredients are in Beijing's airport, in China, awaiting discharge and will be used by Sao Paulo's state-funded Butantan Institute, which has a partnership with Sinovac to produce the vaccines in Brazil.

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