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Washington, February 11 (RHC)-- U.S. President Joe Biden said that the United States is facing a "national emergency" in the coronavirus pandemic and his administration is working to supply enough COVID-19 vaccine to inoculate 300 million Americans. "We're in a national emergency," said Biden, wearing a mask during remarks to scientists at the National Institutes of Health just outside Washington, DC.

"This will be one of the most difficult operational challenges we have ever undertaken as a nation. It's going to take time," Biden said. The U.S. is on pace to exceed Biden's goal of administering 100 million vaccine doses in his first 100 days in office, with more than 26 million shots delivered in his first three weeks. The 300 million doses would be delivered by the end of the summer, Biden said.

"We're now on track to have enough supply for 300 million Americans by the end of July," he announced. Biden said the U.S. coronavirus death toll is likely to reach 500,000 next month. He urged Americans to wear masks as a "patriotic duty" to prevent the spread.

Demand for the vaccine far outstrips supply and Americans are struggling to get appointments for inoculations, leaving Biden with an acute problem less than a month after taking over from former President Donald Trump. Biden criticised Trump, saying the former president had "no plan to vaccinate most of the country."

"My predecessor, let's be blunt about it, did not do his job in getting ready for the massive challenge of vaccinating hundreds of millions of Americans," Biden said. "He didn't order enough vaccines. He didn't mobilise enough people," Biden said.

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