



Daily Brief on Brazilian Politics

March 24, 2020

Our very first brief

Welcome to our very first brief. From Monday to Friday we will go through the highlights of what has been happening in Brazilian politics within the last 24 hours: headlines, politics and the economy. All in a concise manner, of course, to save your precious time. The newsletter is still taking shape and will improve, so please stay with us!

- Bolsonaro announced a support package for states and municipalities totaling R\$88.2 billion (\$17.4 billion). The announcement came after video conferences with state governors.
- São Paulo today confirmed 30 deaths from the virus and 745 confirmed cases of infection. The national count is now 34 deaths and 1891 confirmed cases.
- The hospital that tested President Bolsonaro for the virus provided a list of its infected patients. Two of the identities were not revealed.
- Governors of nine states in Brazil's northeastern region has created a joint task force to combat the spread of the virus.
- A survey by the polling institute *Datafolha* shows that Bolsonaro's handling of the coronavirus crisis has its highest rejection among wealthy and well-educated voters, different from the wide support this segment gave Bolsonaro in the 2018 election.
- A preliminary injunction against the investigation of Bolsonaro's son Flávio, senator representing Rio de Janeiro, was revoked yesterday. He is being investigated for embezzlement during his time as deputy in the state legislature.



Bolsonaro, the vice-president and officials in video conference with governors yesterday.

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Bolsonaro announced a support package for states and municipalities totaling R\$88.2 billion (\$17.4 billion). The announcement came after video conferences with state governors.

According to [BBC Brasil](#), R\$20 billion (\$3.9 billion) had already been announced before the coronavirus arrived in Brazil, currently pending in Congress. R\$8 billion (\$1.6 billion) come from the National Health Fund, with an additional R\$2 billion (\$4 m) for social assistance expenses. R\$16 billion (\$3.1 million) will be released to compensate for losses in income that states and municipalities are expected to incur because of the virus.

Debts totaling R\$12.6 billion (\$2.5 billion) to the federal government will be suspended and R\$9.6 billion (\$2 billion) owed to public banks will be renegotiated. The hope is that these measures will open up resources for states to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The measures came at the same time as the Bolsonaro administration was being criticized for an executive order announced on Sunday. An article in the order allowed companies to suspend employment contracts for four months without salary. The next day the President revoked the article.

The same executive order is also being criticized for weakening the Freedom of Information Act by prolonging the maximum period allowed to provide requested information. The reason given for this measure is that administrative staff handling such requests are working from home.

Latest on the coronavirus

São Paulo today confirmed 30 deaths from the virus and 745 confirmed cases of infection. The national count is now 34 deaths and 1891 confirmed cases. Most deaths so far have occurred in São Paulo. Four of them have occurred in Rio de Janeiro. *Folha de S.Paulo reports* that the average age of female victims is 80 and among men 73. Three people under 60 have died, all of them with diseases that aggravated their condition.

The Ministry of Health has announced that it aims to expand the number of tests available to 22.9 million.

President Bolsonaro has already been tested two times. He said that the last test was negative but chose not to make public the document proving it. São Paulo's governor, João Doria, tweeted that he too tested negative and published the medical document to prove it.

The government of the Federal District (Brasília) requested a list of infected patients from the hospital that tested Jair Bolsonaro. The list contained two people whose identities were not revealed. According to the newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo*, the local government confirmed that there were members of government on the list.

Governors of nine states in Brazil's northeastern region has created a joint task force to combat the spread of the virus. The initiative come in the wake of criticisms by Bolsonaro of measures taken by many governors, measures he deems a "hysteria" that is hurting the economy. The Northeast voted heavily in favor of Bolsonaro's opponent in the 2018 presidential election.

In a new survey released today by the polling institute *Datafolha*, 68% of voters with college education reject statements by President Bolsonaro classifying responses to the coronavirus as "hysteria." Of voters without college education, half agrees that the President is wrong.

A preliminary injunction against the investigation of Bolsonaro's son Flávio, senator representing Rio de Janeiro, was revoked yesterday. He is being investigated for embezzlement during his time as deputy in the state legislature.

Flávio's lawyer had requested the injunction, which was granted earlier this month by the same judge who now revoked it. Flávio's defense team alleged that the judge appointed to the investigation had committed irregularities in handling the process. The allegation was rejected by the state's Court of Justice and on this basis the injunction was revoked.



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