

Embassy of India, Paris

Press, Information and Culture

Traduction de courtoisie :

**"Covid-19 in India: "300 million vaccinations by July", its ambassador hopes" France Inter
(22/01/2021 reported by Valérie Crova)**

1.3 billion people and more than 10 million infected. The Covid-19 pandemic, even if it is registering a significant decline in the country, remains a major concern in India, which launched a vast vaccination campaign on Saturday. Jawed Ashraf, India's ambassador to France, details the challenge.

FRANCE INTER: Health measures to combat Covid-19 have not yet made it possible to stop the pandemic. At what rate do you think you will be able to vaccinate your fellow citizens?

JAWED ASHRAF, India's ambassador to France: "We have been preparing the vaccination campaign [started on 16 January] for a very long time. We have already vaccinated 790,000 people. But we are trying to be quicker and more flexible. During this first phase, we intend to vaccinate 13 million people. And by July, we hope to reach 300 million vaccinations".

This is a major logistical challenge in a country-continent, which brings together 28 states and territories over 3.287 million km² ...

"The campaign was organised in 20 states and territories. We have an infrastructure in place to run it: a cold chain, including 29,000 relays, 45,000 refrigerators, 41,000 freezers, for basic storage. And we are using two vaccines in India. One, Covishield, is developed by AstraZeneca and produced by the Serum Institute of India; the other, Covaxin, is manufactured and developed by the Indian firm Bharat Bioetech".

Precisely, Covaxin, the Indian vaccine that was marketed before the end of Phase 3 clinical trials, is the subject of criticism... How do you respond to this?

"80% of Indians have expressed the desire to be vaccinated. But we have set up more than 1,000 call centres across the country to provide information on these treatments. Beyond that, we have communicated on social media, on television, via local communities in the villages. We've brought in doctors, experts, to explain the risk factors. But there are always people who will say that vaccines are dangerous - it's a global phenomenon. Look at France, where vaccines are apparently not very well received...".

When do you plan to export your coronavirus vaccines to countries affected by the epidemic?

"We have already started to do so, even though we are taking care of our large population. We will do everything we can for the general good of humanity and to meet this health challenge. For us, this is a natural extension of what we have been doing for years."

