

Indian prime minister says more COVID vaccines will be released

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A woman walks past a painting of PM Modi before the inauguration of the COVID-19 vaccination drive Mumbai. (Photo:: Francis Mascarenhas / Reuters)

New Delhi, January 31 (RHC)-- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi says the country would release more locally made COVID-19 vaccines as New Delhi continues to save the lives of people in other countries by exporting medicines and vaccines.

“So far only two made-in-India vaccines have been introduced, but in the future, many more vaccines will be made available,” Modi said at a virtual meeting of the World Economic Forum, adding that India had

“fulfilled its global responsibilities” by setting up infrastructure related to vaccination.

The South Asian nation, one of the world’s biggest makers of medicines, is producing two vaccines – Covishield, licensed from Oxford University and AstraZeneca, and Covaxin, developed at home by Bharat Biotech in partnership with Indian Council of Medical Research.

Covishield is being produced at the Serum Institute of India, the world’s biggest vaccine maker, located in Pune city in the western state of Maharashtra. Indian firm Zydus Cadila is also developing an indigenous DNA-based vaccine, ZyCov-Da, at its facility in the city of Ahmedabad in Modi’s home state, Gujarat.

India is exporting the vaccine to several countries, including providing hundreds of thousands of free immunisation doses to neighbouring countries, where it is vying for influence with its rival China.

India began vaccinating people on January 16th and has so far given one shot to almost 2.4 million health workers and others, with the aim of inoculating 300 million Indians by July. Modi also said India will issue health identity cards to its 1.3 billion citizens. The Indian prime minister said India has taken steps to overcome the shock posed by the spread of COVID-19 and has been carrying out reforms to improve its economy.

India’s economy, Asia’s third-largest, is expected to contract 7.7 percent in the current financial year ending in March, the worst performance in 40 years as a COVID-19 related lockdown hit the economic and industrial activity. “I want to assure the business world that the situation will now change rapidly on the economic front also,” he said, adding India’s push for self-reliance through local manufacturing is aimed at turning the country into an export hub.

India believes in opening all sectors for private players and would provide support to companies looking at investing in the country, he added. “Our [self-reliance policy] is committed towards global good and global supply chain. India has the capacity, capability and reliability to strengthen the global supply chain,” he said.

The World Economic Forum’s annual meeting at the start of the year is taking place online because of the pandemic. In normal years, thousands of top politicians and corporate leaders gather in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos.

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