

Bharat Bio ups capacity for Hepatitis B vaccine 200%

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The city-based Bharat Biotech International Ltd (BBIL) has raised its capacity for recombinant Hepatitis B vaccine by almost 200 per cent from 35 million doses to 100 million doses per annum, thus becoming the largest plant in the southern hemisphere.

With the enlarged capacity, BBIL is looking at exports and also transfer of bulk material to other units for final containerisation and packaging under different brand names, if permitted by government.

According to BBIL chairman and managing director, Krishna M Ella, the plant, set up at a capital cost of Rs 21 crore is among the most modern and meets the requirements laid down by the Federal Drugs Administration of the US, the UK's MCA and the World Health Organisation.

Krishna said that he was looking forward to the Centre including the Hepatitis B vaccine in its universal immunisation programme, in which case the domestic demand for the vaccine would be around 85 million doses a year against an available capacity of around 140 million doses - between BBIL and Shanta Biotech.

"Such a measure would help bring down the price of the vaccine for the consumer," he said.

Already some states have taken the initiative and have started their own Hepatitis B immunisation programmes.

Haryana has already engaged BBIL for such a programme while Chennai and Ahmedabad Municipal Corporations have also accepted the tender offered by BBIL for the purpose.

K S Rao, company director, made out a strong case for the government permitting vaccine manufacturers to transfer their bulk material to other units for final containerisation and packing under a different brand name.

He said there was no reason for this ban when the Government allowed freely imports of bulk material and final products of vaccine and other biologicals.

Krishna announced that another product of BBIL, streptokinase, was in final stages of development and would be introduced before the end of the current fiscal.

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