

Public sector vaccine unit re-starts production

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NEW DELHI: India's dependence on private sector pharmaceutical companies for its supplies of vaccine for the universal immunisation programme (UIP) will soon end with the Central Research Institute at Kasauli, one of the country's major vaccine-manufacturing Public Sector Undertaking, re-starting DPT vaccine supply to the Centre. The unit, last week, delivered 16.84 lakh doses to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

This is the first batch of vaccine doses manufactured and supplied by CRI Kasauli since 2008 when the Ministry cancelled the licences of the three vaccine manufacturing units

including, the Pasteur Institute of India at Conoor in Tamil Nadu and the BCG Vaccine Laboratory at Guindy, Chennai, following an inspection by a team of the World Health Organisation (WHO), which said these units did not comply with good manufacturing practices (GMP). The decision led to a vaccine shortage, adversely affecting the universal immunisation programme, and raised a huge debate over the attempts to promote private manufacturers.

However, the licences were restored in 2010 on the recommendations of the Javid Chowdhury committee report that described licence suspension as "incorrect" and

based on an "illegal procedure" and a "flawed appreciation" of the issues.

Sources in the Health Ministry told *The Hindu* that the "revived" Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) compliant CRI Kasauli would supply 30 lakh doses next month, which would be used for UIP. These doses have been approved by the Drugs Controller-General of India. From April 1, when production starts from the new facility at Kasauli, the unit will deliver 30 lakh doses every month, which would be used globally.

Meanwhile, PII Conoor will also start the supply of vaccine doses from June this year with a target of 20 lakh doses a month. Its annual target is to

supply 30 million doses in 2012-13.

As for BCG Vaccine Laboratory, the Centre has already cleared a proposal for Rs. 64 crore for making it GMP compliant, and if all goes well, it should be in a position to start manufacturing vaccine within two years.

On the other hand, the Ministry has also proposed Rs. 600 crore for the Integrated Vaccine Complex at Chennai, which will take care of pentavalent and newer vaccines needed for the health programme, thereby reducing dependence on the private sector, sources said. The private sector would, nevertheless, continue to be part of the UIP.

Manufacturing