

Cheaper vaccines need of the hour: Kalam

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Hyderabad, Oct. 22: Hyderabad: "I have a three-vaccine dream for the country," Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, scientific advisor to Prime Minister, has said and urged Indian scientists to increasingly focus their attention on developing vaccines for the three major diseases Hepatitis-B, malaria and HIV prevalent in the country today.

Speaking at a function organised in connection with the launch of "Revac-B," a recombinant vaccine for Hepatitis-B, developed and manufactured by city-based Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL) here on Thursday, Dr Kalam said that though vaccines were now being developed for Hepatitis-B, it was only one of the serious diseases affecting the masses and, therefore, it was equally important that attention was given to developing and manufacturing vaccines for the two other serious problems, malaria and HIV. Observing that while scientists in the US are learnt to have identified one out of estimated 43 vaccines for HIV, these efforts offered little comfort for India, as the disease is said to be prevalent in a more virulent form in India and would therefore necessitate a different vaccine. In this context, he urged the Indian scientists to take up the task. He, however, emphasised that it was important that the vaccines were made available at affordable prices. Bharat Biotech chairman and managing director Dr Krishna Ella said the company had undertaken the task of developing and manufacturing the vaccine for Hepatitis-B using the recombinant DNA technology route. Priced at Rs 160 for children's dose and Rs 200 for an adult dose, "Revac-B," as the product is called, is being produced using "Saccharomyces cerevisiae," also known as the "baker's yeast." According to Dr Ella, this strain is licensed for use by the US federal drug authority (USFDA), WHO and EC drug regulation authorities.

Bharat Biotech, he said, was seeking viable alternative remedies for diseases endemic to the Asian region which included remedies to combat afflictions of the heart, pancreas, liver, kidney and the nervous system.

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