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India loses its vaccine export sheen

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Vaccine exports from the country plunged by eight per cent during 2016-17 and nearly four per cent in the previous fiscal year.



India, once called as the vaccine capital, is slowly losing its sheen because of various reasons, primarily the aggressive marketing strategy of China and Korea and the lacklustre policies of the government of India, say experts.

Vaccine exports from the country plunged by eight per cent during 2016-17 and nearly four per cent in the previous fiscal year.

India exported vaccines worth USD 653.40 million in 2017-18 while it was USD 679.28 million in 2016-17, according to data of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council, a body under the Ministry of Commerce.

Over 70 per cent of vaccines were exported based on UNICEF requirement, which recently changed its procurement policy from yearly indent to quarterly, resulting in uncertainty over production schedule, said chairman and managing director of Bharat Biotech Krishna Ella.

The method adopted by the international body on vaccine procurement gave an edge to Korea and China on price bargaining resulting in price erosion, Ella said.

Serum Institute of India, Bharat Biotech and Biological E Limited were the leading suppliers to UNICEF. He said the government of India needs to shed bureaucracy-centric policies and develop science-oriented ones to encourage vaccine-manufacturers.

According to industry sources, some of the Korean companies such as LG Chem and Samsung were spending millions of dollars on expansion and modernising their facilities.

Koreans and Chinese have become aggressive; both were getting into the markets of developed countries which India has been exporting to.

Director General of Pharmexcil Uday Bhaskar said vaccine constituted 3.78 per cent of the total pharmaceutical exports last year. Though there has been a negative growth of 10.25 per cent till February last year, it recovered in March and ended up at 3.81 per cent.