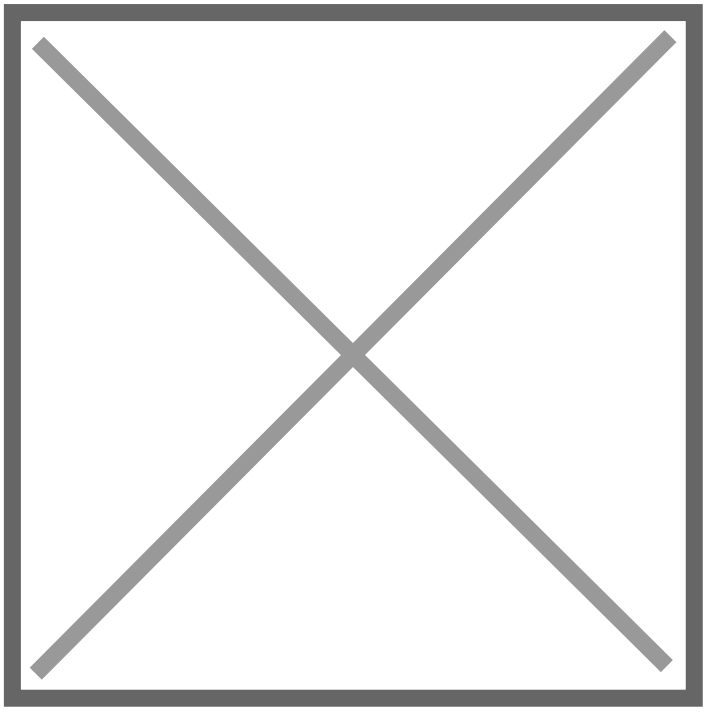
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Man on a Mission: IT tycoon meets Indian vaccines czar

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8x10cspbillgatesandacpAs a part of his Ã¢â?¬Å?End PolioÃ¢â?¬? campaign in India, Bill Gates paid a visit to the facility of India's vaccine leader, Serum Institute of India and is looking at forging ties for its Rotavirus and polio vaccines

Towards the beginning of June, Microsoft founder and co-chairman of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates paid a visit to the facility of India's top vaccine manufacturer, Serum Institute of India (SII), Pune and met up with its CMD, Dr Cyrus Poonawalla, whom he has referred to as one of the seven vaccine heroes. Gates had come on a visit to India, wherein he traveled to New Delhi, Bihar, UP, Pune, and Bangalore. He also met the newly appointed Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mr Akhilesh Yadav.

During his visit to SII, Gates had expressed interest in many of SII's pipeline of injectable vaccine products. It is most likely that Gates will look at forging ties with SII for its polio vaccines and rota virus vaccines immediately. Speaking to BioSpectrum, Dr Cyrus Poonawalla, CMD, SII mentioned, Ã¢â?¬Å?Bill Gates is impressed with SII because we have been successful in providing a large array of vaccines and at affordable prices to the developing countries of the world. He was keen on visiting our facility. Most of our vaccine products, mainly injectable vaccines like polio and Rotavirus are of immediate interest to him. He wants us to make those available at an affordable cost.Ã¢â?¬?

In addition to this, Gates also welcomed the initiative of SII for slashing the cost of its recently launched 5-in-1 pentavalent vaccine by 60 percent for the developing nations of the world.

Ã¢â?¬Å?Cyrus Poonawalla is among the seven vaccine heroes and is a multiple winner with vaccines against measles and others. He has deeply affected the vaccine world and people are dependent on the quality work done at Serum,Ã¢â?¬? Gates stated to the media. Adar C Poonawalla, executive director operations, SII, informed BioSpectrum that, Ã¢â?¬Å?This is a long term partnership. The foundation will look at pooling in funds for the development of some of our vaccines.Ã¢â?¬?

According to Dr SD Ravetkar, executive director, SII, Ã¢â?¬Å?Gates is highly focused on affordable vaccines and despite being from the IT sector, he has a deep understanding of the vaccine sector, which is an amazing trait.Ã¢â?¬?

Gates has been proactive in the development of vaccines for unmet diseases and at affordable costs. Back in 2010, at the World Economic Summit in Davos, which declared 2010-20 as the Ã¢â?¬Å?decade of vaccinesÃ¢â?¬?, Gates had announced that he was allocating a sum of $10 billion towards the development and delivery of vaccines to the developing nations of the world. This would be for diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonia and diarrhea, for which vaccines are yet to be made available. He further said that availability of vaccines for these diseases would save around eight million children by the end of 2020. In March 2011, Gates along with wife Melinda Gates paid a visit to India and met the policy makers and other stakeholders and announced that they would be allocating a sizable amount of funds for the late stage

clinical trials to SII and Hyderabad-based, Bharat Biotech, for pneumonia and Rotavirus vaccines.