

“Our goal is to avoid dependence on imports and to promote a sustainable and robust industry”

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Dr Krishna Ella, Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of Bharat Biotech and Vice President of Indian Vaccine Manufacturers Association (IVMA) has been appointed as President of IVMA for a two-year period from April 20224. Building on the legacy of his predecessor, Adar C. Poonawalla, who held the position from 2019 to March 2024, Dr Ella in an exclusive interview with BioSpectrum shared his vision and priorities for the future of the Indian vaccine industry.

As the new President of the IVMA, what are your key priorities and objectives for advancing the mission of ensuring global access to life-saving immunisations?

Our priorities at IVMA are to transform the status of the Indian vaccine industry from a leader in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LIMCs) to a global vaccine leader across the world.

The regulations that govern vaccine development and manufacturing are administered by several Ministries at the State and Central levels in India leading to inconsistencies. We wish to collaborate with government agencies to streamline the regulatory processes to be more transparent, streamlined, and enforceable.

How do you plan to continue the legacy of your predecessor and further strengthen the role of IVMA in advocating for vaccine equity and accessibility across different regions and demographics?

My predecessor Adar C. Poonawalla did an excellent job in highlighting the issues related to our industry and developing solutions to solve some of them. I look forward to carrying forward that legacy.

With more than five decades of experience in the worldwide supply of vaccines, we wish to present India as a global vaccine leader. These supplies amount to 10's of billions of doses of vaccines, which helped save millions of lives and livelihoods

worldwide. The Indian vaccine industry has been a steadfast partner in supplying high-quality vaccines at affordable prices, with public health as the top priority.

How do you plan to balance innovation, sustainability, and equity to drive the development and distribution of vaccines, particularly in underprivileged areas?

The Indian vaccine industry must innovate and develop novel vaccines. This is important as competition is building up within India and globally. Innovative and differentiated products are critical to our sustainability, maintaining our knowledge, expertise, and resources towards R&D and new products. Within India and in most LICs and MICs, vaccination coverages are healthy. However, vaccination rates need to be improved in countries facing conflicts and inadequate health systems.

While vaccine innovation is highly sought after, especially for new infectious diseases, and improvement in product profiles for existing vaccines, the industry is uncertain if procurement agencies are willing to pay a premium for innovative vaccines. There are significant pricing pressures on the vaccine industry, driving most companies towards routine vaccines, instead of novel vaccines.

With a focus on fostering growth in startups, industry-academia partnerships, and Public-Private Partnerships, how do you plan to navigate challenges and seize opportunities to advance the vaccine manufacturing ecosystem in India under your leadership at IVMA?

We have a few startups in the vaccine industry but are constrained due to high CAPEX, long lead times for product development, and regulatory approvals. However, the ecosystem for vaccines and vaccinology is very well established in the country. There are several examples of collaborations between industry and academia, for vaccine development and manufacturing. A good sign for the vaccine industry is that several ancillary products, equipment, reagents, consumables, and services required for our industry are available within the country. One of our goals is to further increase the extent and maturity of the entire vaccine ecosystem, to avoid dependence on imports, and to promote a sustainable and robust industry.

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