

India plans to re-work immunisation programme

India plans to 're-engineer' its immunisation programme by introducing additional vaccines for children up to the age of five years, a norm followed in 114 countries, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Health Secretary Naresh Dayal Tuesday said apart from 're-engineering' the immunisation programme, the government was also updating its three public sector laboratories, which have been closed since December as they do not meet the World Health Organisation (WHO) Good Medical Practices guidelines.

The suggestion to introduce a pentavalent vaccine came from the sub-committee of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, headed by Biotechnology Secretary M.K. Bhan, Dayal said.

He said they could introduce a pentavalent vaccine in the national immunisation programme that will combine DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) with hepatitis B, pneumonia and meningitis caused by the Hib bacteria (haemophilus influenza type B) by the end of this year.

The final decision is yet to be taken on the introduction of this vaccine, Dayal told reporters here.

'About 114 countries are already using pentavalent vaccine, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh,' he said.

Drugs Controller General Surinder Singh said after the final decision they would float a tender, which would bring down the cost of the vaccine.

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