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COVID-19 vaccines: India needs to rise

India has to work hard to defend its position as the global hub of vaccine production

By Vibha Varshney (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/vibha-varshney-50>)

Published: Wednesday 14 April 2021



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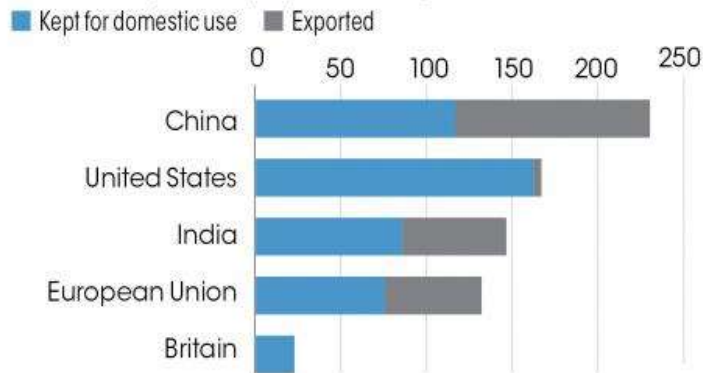
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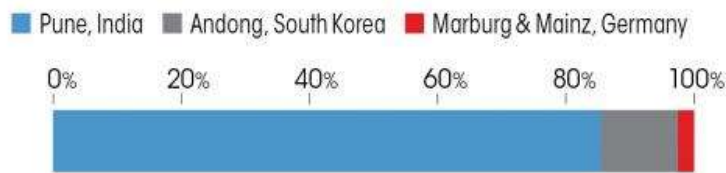
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Source: Airlinety, as on March 29, 2021

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elsewhere,” said Anthony Mc Donnell, senior policy analyst, global health, Center for Global Development in Europe.

In terms of COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, the country has now lost the supremacy to China and the US. Yet, it seems to be in a good place.

“Under the Vaccine Maitri initiative, India has provided 60 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 70 countries including the UK, Brazil, Morocco and Bangladesh,” said Sudarshan Jain, secretary-general of Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance that represents 24 Indian pharmaceutical companies. The country’s vaccine export efforts have helped strengthen external relationships with neighbours in South Asia, he added.

India, in fact, is faring better than China in diplomacy. In May 2020, just a month before rolling out its COVID-19 vaccine Convidecia, the first in the world, China had announced that it was for “global public good”. Since then China has shipped vaccines to 35 countries, but has used it as a business opportunity, wrote Ivana Karásková and Veronika Blablová, researchers at Association for International Affairs in Prague in an article published March 24.

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India has another advantage: Since it has been providing a major chunk of the vaccines needed for immunisation programmes across the world, the quality of its supplies is established. Compared to this, China is secretive about scrutiny and quality is doubtful. “China is out of fashion politically too,” said S Srinivasan, managing trustee of locost, a generic drug company.

As a result, several multinationals are interested in manufacturing their vaccines in India. Russia is already in talks with at least five Indian companies to manufacture 850 million doses of Sputnik V vaccine by 2021. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories has carried out clinical trials for Sputnik V and has applied for an emergency use authorisation (EUA) licence in India.

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Some 0.15 million people had arrived at the river by noon April 12. On April 11, the number was 95,000 and on 10 April, the number was up to 40,000.

But despite the fall in the number of pilgrims April 14, the graph of COVID-19 cases in Haridwar is surging. According to Chief Medical Officer SK Jha, COVID-19 infection is spreading in the city at the rate of 0.6 per cent. He said RT-PCR tests were not possible though antigen tests were being conducted.

There is also confusion about the actual number of COVID-19 positive cases. Jha said while the number was less according to the antigen tests, it was high according to the few RT-PCR tests that had been conducted.

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Three patients succumbed to COVID-19 in Odisha in the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 1,933, Bijay Panigrahi, the director of the health and family welfare department, Government of Odisha, said.

Odisha had last hit the 2,000-mark October 17, 2020 when 2019 people had tested positive for the virus —Some 851 of the patients had contacted the disease locally.

This time, Sundargarh district, bordering Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, has topped the list with 458 cases, followed by Khordha (348), Sambalpur (120), Bargarh (120), Cuttack (117), Nuapada (104) and Nabarangpur (104).

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An additional 300-bed COVID-19 hospital will be set up at the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Burla of Sambalpur district. It will constitute 250 general beds with oxygen facilities and 50 intensive care units. It will be ready within 10 days, Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, Odisha's chief secretary said April 14.

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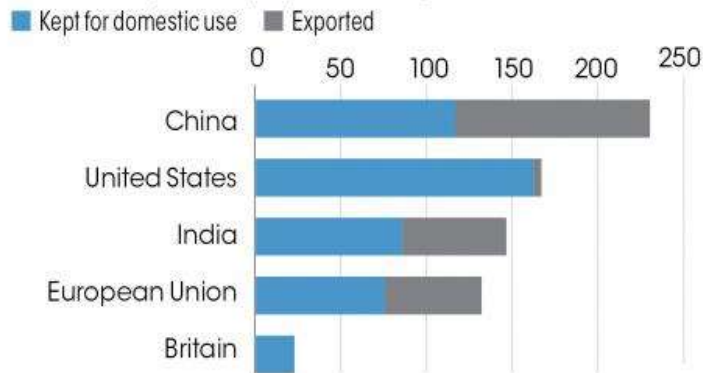
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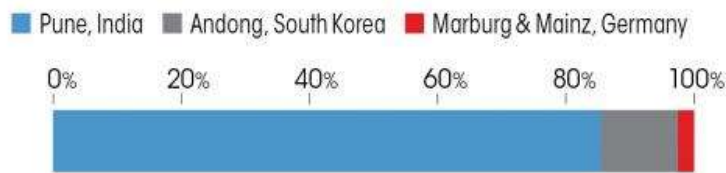
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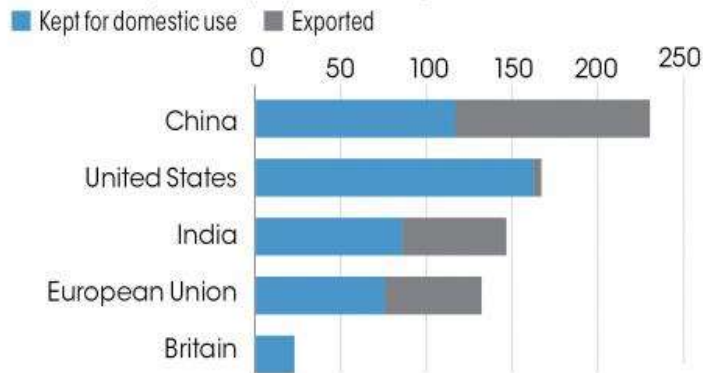
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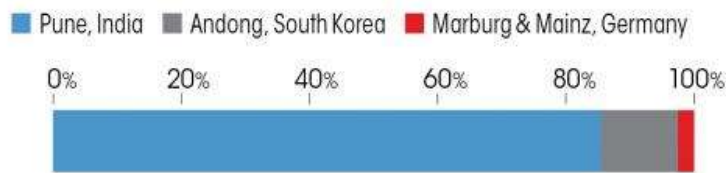
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HEALTH

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By Ashis Senapati (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/ashis-senapati-2149>)

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By Vibha Varshney (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/author/vibha-varshney-50>)

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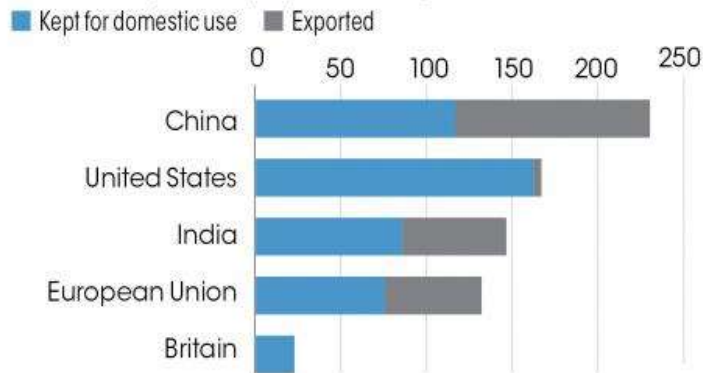
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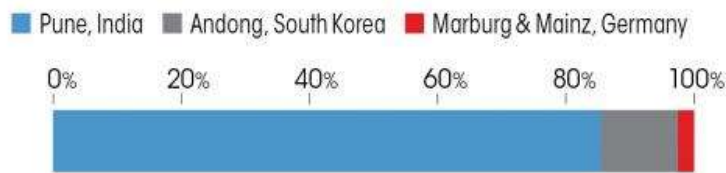
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In terms of COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, the country has now lost the supremacy to China and the US. Yet, it seems to be in a good place.

“Under the Vaccine Maitri initiative, India has provided 60 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 70 countries including the UK, Brazil, Morocco and Bangladesh,” said Sudarshan Jain, secretary-general of Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance that represents 24 Indian pharmaceutical companies. The country’s vaccine export efforts have helped strengthen external relationships with neighbours in South Asia, he added.

India, in fact, is faring better than China in diplomacy. In May 2020, just a month before rolling out its COVID-19 vaccine Convidecia, the first in the world, China had announced that it was for “global public good”. Since then China has shipped vaccines to 35 countries, but has used it as a business opportunity, wrote Ivana Karásková and Veronika Blablová, researchers at Association for International Affairs in Prague in an article published March 24.

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As a result, several multinationals are interested in manufacturing their vaccines in India. Russia is already in talks with at least five Indian companies to manufacture 850 million doses of Sputnik V vaccine by 2021. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories has carried out clinical trials for Sputnik V and has applied for an emergency use authorisation (EUA) licence in India.

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Officials at Kumbh Mela report decrease in number of pilgrims at second royal bath even as COVID-19 cases surge

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But despite the fall in the number of pilgrims April 14, the graph of COVID-19 cases in Haridwar is surging. According to Chief Medical Officer SK Jha, COVID-19 infection is spreading in the city at the rate of 0.6 per cent. He said RT-PCR tests were not possible though antigen tests were being conducted.

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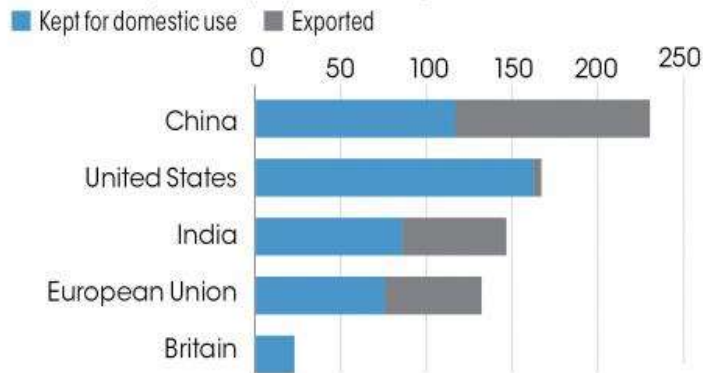
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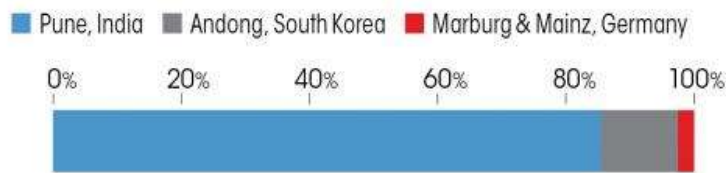
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