



Health Secretary inaugurates 'Vatsalya – Maatri Amrit Kosh', a National Human Milk Bank and Lactation Counselling Centre

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Shri C K Mishra, Secretary (Health and Family Welfare) inaugurated the 'Vatsalya – Maatri Amrit Kosh', a National Human Milk Bank and Lactation Counselling Centre at the Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC), here today. Speaking on the occasion, Shri C K Mishra congratulated the LHMC, Delhi for this initiative and said that this would be the largest human milk bank and lactation counselling centre available under the public sector in North India. The Health Secretary further added that it is envisaged that with this donor human milk bank, all newborns in and around Delhi will have access to life saving human milk regardless of the circumstances of their birth. Mr Nils Ragnar Kamsvag, Ambassador of Norway to India, was also present at the occasion. "Vatsalya – Maatri Amrit Kosh" is established in collaboration with the Norwegian government, Oslo University and Norway India Partnership Initiative (NIPI).

Speaking at the function, Shri Mishra said that even when we know the potential of mother's milk for a child, breastfeeding rates are low in India. He informed the participants that the early initiation of breastfeeding is only 40%, even when the institutional delivery has increased to 78.9%. "In view of this, we launched Mothers Absolute Affection (MAA) programme to create awareness regarding breastfeeding as being the most cost-effective way of enhancing the child's immunity," Shri Mishra stated.

The Health Secretary further said that the decline in maternal and child mortality in India is much faster than the global average rate of decline and thanked the frontline workers for their dedicated work. "We are poised to enhance Universal Health Coverage in the country and are conscious of quality issues. Several efforts are underway through NHM to improve affordability, quality and access to healthcare services", Shri Mishra elaborated.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Nils Ragnar Kamsvag, Ambassador of Norway to India said that human milk increases survival rate for those neonates whose mother cannot produce enough milk. "I am proud in being a partner with Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC) in this endeavor and I am confident that this will provide guidance, inspiration and guidelines for more such milk banks for helping sick newborn babies," Mr Nils said. He complimented the government for the MAA initiative.

"Vatsalya – Maatri Amrit Kosh" opened at Lady Hardinge Medical College in collaboration with the Norwegian government, Oslo University and NIPI Newborn Project, is a national human milk bank and lactation counseling centre that will collect, pasteurize, test and safely store milk that has been donated by lactating mothers and make it available for infants in need. In addition, this facility will protect, promote and support breastfeeding of their own healthy mothers by providing lactation support to mothers through dedicated lactation counsellors. This project will not only act as a dedicated centre to support breastfeeding and improve infant survival but also act as the teaching, training and demonstration site for other milk banks to be established under the Ministry Of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

Also present at the function were Prof. Jagdish Chandra, Director LHMC and Dr Arvind Saili along with other senior faculty members of LHMC and senior officers of the Ministry and representatives from donor partners, and health experts.

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