

IVF centres planned in Govt hospitals

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GUWAHATI, Sept 3: For the poor, childless married couples in Assam, there finally emerges a ray of hope!

For the first time, the State Government plans to facilitate IVF (in-vitro fertilization) treatment or birth of a 'test tube baby' for the fertility-challenged couples in government-run hospitals.

Sources informed that an IVF centre will first start at the Guwahati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) and subsequently, such centres will be replicated in other medical colleges as well.

The introduction of the IVF centre under the Gynaecology Department of the GMCH would mean that poor, childless parents, too, would have access to the facilities at a cost which would be less than half the cost charged by private hospitals across the country.

A source at Dispur told this reporter that although the idea

to have such facilities at the GMCH was mooted some two years back, the matter got stalled for a number of reasons.

"The IVF centre at the GMCH would be of state-of-the-art quality and a team of dedicated staff, including doctors, would render their serv-

ices. It will have all the specialised features of top class facility," the sources said, adding the nitty-gritty of the set-up is being discussed.

In Assam, the first test tube baby was born on July 7, 1995 under Dr ML Goenka at the Institute of Human Reproduction (IHR) located in Guwahati and since then hundreds of such babies were born in the Northeast.

In the Northeast, around 80 to 100 babies are born through IVF treatment every month and the success rate is believed to be highest in the IHR, the institute which pioneered the trend in the region under Dr Goenka.

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is identified with the Assamese society today.

The *sattras* institutions and the *naamghars* he had established about five centuries back to spread his religious belief, have now emerged as the centres of Assamese Neo-Vaishnavite culture.

The *ankiya bhaona*, the Sattriya dance and the *borgeets*, which were created by him have now become integral parts of Assamese culture.

IVF centres ...

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Dr Deepak Goenka, an IVF expert and Chairman of the IHR, told this reporter that the success rate of IVF treatment in the institute (IHR) is more than 60 per cent.

Apart from the IHR, five other clinics offer the IVF treatment in Guwahati.

Dr Goenka, when asked, said that it is good that the government hospitals are coming up with such plans because not everyone can afford such treatment in a private set-up.

"The acceptance level among people of the State and the region as a whole has been increasing over the years. Being one of the pioneers in this field, we at IHR are treating couples not only from places like Delhi and West Bengal but also from abroad. We have the best facilities at par with any international set-up," Dr Goenka said, pointing out that 10 to 15 per cent of the married couples in India are estimated to be infertile, with Assam being no exception.

Dr Illias Ali of the GMCH, who has been leading the family planning campaign, too, has welcomed the government move saying the decision would be a blessing to couples who are not so financially well-off.

"I have seen parents shelling out money beyond their capacity to become parents. Hopefully, with IVF treatment facility within the government set-up, such cases will not be repeated," Dr Ali added.

IVF is the process by which eggs are removed from the ovaries and mixed with sperm in a laboratory culture dish for fertilization. The fertilised egg is then transferred to the patient's uterus.

Sperm, egg ...

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from varied professional fields including defence, glamour world and sports are opting for egg or semen freezing so that the best quality samples of egg or semen could be stored and used for pregnancy whenever deemed fit by the person concerned," said Deepak Goenka, a leading Guwahati-based in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) expert and chairman of the city-based Institute of Human Reproduction (IHR) while talking to this reporter.

The IHR which is one of the pioneers in the field was among one of the first to have such facilities in place. The first baby of Northeast India from cryo-preserved oocyte was delivered at IHR in 2012. "In today's world, women have become career-oriented. The idea is to ensure that they are not denied the joy of parenthood and family in case of any eventuality or a delayed marriage or delayed family planning without compromising with their career," said Dr Goenka. "It was reported that corporate houses like Facebook and Apple are paying for egg preservation of their employees, and earlier in this year, Pentagon, US, has also started paying for their defence personnel for the same cause," the IVF expert said.

"As on today, IHR has preserved oocytes of more than 100 females," Dr Goenka revealed.

He also mentioned that football players who come during the Indian Soccer League and otherwise from Meghalaya and other places tend to drop in at the IHR to avail the facility. "We, in IHR, have received and stored such samples from all sorts of people regardless of their profession, class, religion, etc.," he said.