

Mandatory screening of newborns in Goa

It is the first state in the country where a series of medical tests will be conducted to identify 50 possible metabolic disorders

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Tests will be done in partnership with Neogen Labs in Bangalore

PANAJI: Goa has become the first state in the country to have mandatory screening of newborn babies to identify untreated metabolic disorders.

"From today onwards all the babies born in the state's government hospitals would be screened while subsequently we will also try to involve private nursing homes in the project," State Health Minister Vishwajeet Rane said on Saturday.

A series of medical tests will be conducted on the newborns to screen for 50 metabolic dis-

orders, he said.

Inaugurating the screening facility at Goa Medical College and Hospital at Bambolim, Rane said, "The screening will be done in partnership with Neogen Labs in Bangalore using tandem mass spectrometry technology licenced from US-based Erkinelmer Genetics."

Government figures indicate there are 23,000 child births in the state, of which 8,000 are delivered in government run hospitals.

"We have become the first state to implement the manda-

tory screening. We could do it because we are small state," the health minister said.

"At times, if the disorders are not treated in time, the child can die. We can also save the future expenses by diagnosing the disorder at the initial stage," Rane said.

According to Director of health services Dr Rajananda Desai, around two to three per cent of the babies in the state are born with disorders.

"There are some disorders which can be treated by advising proper diet to the parents.

We can even suggest the parents whether to go for the second child or not," Desai added.

The company, which has set up its base in Goa Medical College and Hospital, will be taking blood samples to Bangalore for testing.

"If disorders are serious, we will inform the doctors about the results within 24 hours," Nihal George, Senior Manager, Neogen Labs, stated.

Goa health authorities said that they will educate the parents before screening their child. PTI