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Take benefits of advances in medicine to the needy: Venkatachaliah

Special Correspondent

Surgeries help cure 200 children of congenital heart defects

COIMBATORE: Benefits of the developments in the field of medicine should reach the needy. "Medical marvels must be brought to the people," former Chief Justice of India M.N. Venkatachaliah said here on Thursday.

As chief guest of "GOL 200 Success Story", a function organised by the Rotary Club of Coimbatore Saicity to commemorate the completion of 200 surgeries to cure children of congenital heart defect under the Gift of Life programme, he said nearly 75,000 children out of the 18 million born every year suffered from heart defects at birth.

In India, the occurrence of congenital heart disease was four per 1,000 live births. The world average was four to 12. Japan's rate was 21 to 26 but it was compensated by the efficiency of its medical system.

When surgery to correct these problems cost Rs. 28 lakh in the United States, it was heartening to note that the Gift of Life programme could do it at just Rs. 28,000, he said.

Appreciating the involvement of the "noble and golden hearts" in the project, he said: "Hundreds and thousands of such movements are needed to reach out to those who required this help across the country."

Instead of Rotary office-bearers or doctors, children who underwent surgery under this project welcomed the guests at the function. The Gift of Life Foundation based in New York supported the project.

Gift of Life Foundation - India Chairman Ravi Bhooplapur said the first surgery was done on November 14 (Children's Day), 2002, in Coimbatore, which was the first city in the country to take up the project.

"More than 200 children have been saved with support from hospitals and donors. The success has come from self-less service." He said the project hoped to cover 300 more waitlisted children by June next year.

Past Rotary International Director Sushil Gupta presented mementos to cardio-thoracic surgeons and the hospitals they represented for their participation.

He said the Rotary focussed on solving various problems in society and was adopting villages to promote rainwater harvesting.

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