

# Bringing nutrition to babies

Chennai Jan 31 : India has the highest number of pre-term babies, according to the 2010 data from the World Health Organisation. Around 35,19,100 babies are born premature every year in India — thrice the numbers in China, which stands at 11,72,300. To reduce the premature mortality rate, Bengaluru-based Neolacta Life Sciences makes two mother's milk-based products.

“This is one of the three companies all over the world, and the only one in Asia that produces mother's milk-based products,” says Saurabh Aggarwal, MD, Neolacta Life Sciences. Saurabh's family is from Australia, where they had their own dairy farm and an engineering company. Putting the knowledge of the two fields together, Neolacta makes their own equipment to provide two products — fortifier and the 70 calorie.

“The rate of prematurity is increasing across the world



because of various factors like change in lifestyle, having babies at a later stage in life, and even environmental changes. The reason we chose to set up our plant in India is we want to be committed to the intact survival of pre-mature babies here,” he says. Neolacta products are for babies in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) environment.

When a baby is born before 37 weeks, or ahead of the term, they are called pre-term babies. “Prematurity has nothing to do with the weight, but the term. It is in the last trimester that the babies develop most of their major organs in the

womb,” explains Saurabh. Majority of mothers who have pre-term babies struggle with insufficient or no lactation. As a result, the babies suffer from sepsis, NEC (necrotising enterocolitis) or pneumonia.

In the last 18 months, Neolacta products have benefited more than 1,500 babies in Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad. After collecting data over 18 months, and testing 10,000+ mothers, Neolacta noted that Indian mothers have less calorie count than the western mothers and that is one of the primary reasons for premature births. “Hence, we developed the 70 calories. Typically, mother's milk has 55 calories, but a pre-term baby needs more. So, we extract the cream from a large pool of mother's milk and add it to a smaller quantity to prepare this product. It has around 70 calories and this is given to the babies in NICU as per requirement,” explains Saurabh.