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## Jadeja hits out for jaundice awareness

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 23.

A yellow alert was sounded here on Tuesday evening. A Children's Awareness and Support Programme — (CLASP) was launched by Mr. Vinod Khanna, MP, and cricketer Ajay Jadeja.

The "yellow alert" is to create awareness about the need for early identification of jaundice in babies.

CLASP has produced two booklets, 'Liver Disorders in Childhood' and 'Early Identification in Infants' written by Dr. Anupam Sibal. CLASP will also highlight the need to prevent Hepatitis 'B' and 'C'.

Mr. Khanna said people affected by the Hepatitis B virus number 500 times more than those affected by AIDS.

"I am aware of the problems involved in Hepatitis B. I lost my father a few years ago. He underwent an operation and in the process was given a blood transfusion. He came down with the Hepatitis B virus and died suddenly. Had it not been for the virus, he would have lived for another 20 or 25 years," he said.

Wishing the programme success, Mr. Khanna said thousands of children die because of liver disease and yet there is no awareness. He said jaundice in babies is quite common in India and by the time parents switch to a specialised doctor, it is often too late.

Ajay Jadeja said awareness about liver disease is vital and the media can play a crucial role.

"I wasn't sure what I was coming for. Once I knew, it was scary, it is a cause for which we should all come forward," he said.

It is parents who are affected as kids are too young to feel the agony. He said on behalf of cricketers: "we will do all we can to further this cause".

He said it was not just a question of releasing some awareness booklets. "I would like to go around villages and see affected people."

Dr. Anupam Sibal, said early identification of jaundice in babies is important. Ninety per cent of normal babies have jaundice after birth which clears within 10 days. If the jaundice persists beyond two weeks, the baby can have serious liver disease and needs to see an expert for urine and blood tests.

Sibal said four crore Indians carry the Hepatitis B virus and two crore Hepatitis C. Every year, 270,000 babies are born with Hepatitis B. Of the nearly 1,20,00 cases of liver cancer per year, 80 per cent are related to Hepatitis B and C. Yet, Hepatitis B vaccination is not provided under

the universal immunisation programme and testing of blood for Hepatitis C before blood transfusion has not been made mandatory.

Dr. S. Ramalingaswami, a senior medical practitioner and WHO Consultant, was present. Established in association with the Children's Liver Disease Foundation, UK, CLASP is a Project run by the Shri Ram Washeshran Devi Bhatia Memorial Charitable Trust. It aims to undertake and promote medical and scientific research relating to pediatric liver disorders and lay down guidelines to standardise treatment of common liver diseases through expert panels.



Mr. Vinod Khanna MP, and Ajay Jadeja releasing a booklet on liver disease in children. With them is the author of the booklet, Dr. Anupam Sibal in New Delhi on Tuesday.