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Title: Need to take effective measures to significantly reduce child mortality rate in the country.

DR. SANJAY JAISWAL (PASCHIM CHAMPARAN): The Government has taken great strides in the field of child health and survival with the introduction of four new vaccines into the Universal Immunisation Programme. Another welcome step is the inauguration of the Indian Newborn Action Plan. These are undoubtedly promising initiatives, yet we still face a lot of challenges.

The country contributes 1.4 million of the global burden of 6.6 million under-five child deaths, which is the highest for any nation in the world. Nearly 26 million infants are born each year, of whom nearly 1 million die before completing the first 4 weeks of life. Today we are at a critical juncture towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 4 (MDG 4) that requires Under Five Mortality Rate to be reduced by two thirds between 1990 and 2015. This, in case of India, translates into a goal of reducing Under Five Mortality Rate from 118 per 1000 live births in 1990 to 39 per 1000 live births in 2015. The current level in India (as per latest data of 2012) is 52.

Newborn deaths are not inevitable. Most are easily avoided if the simplest of interventions are made available to all. In the light of the above, it would be prudent to know how the Government proposes to address this issue with the approaching MDG deadline in mind.