

Alert nurse saves 9 premature babies from fire at govt hospital in Nagpur

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NAGPUR: An alert nurse, Savita Ikhhar (47), on night duty saved nine premature babies after a fire broke out at Indira Gandhi Government College and Hospital (IGGMCH) at 2.30am on Saturday. The incident happened after an electrical short circuit at the post birth unit (PBU)-NICU of the department of paediatrics.

In the miraculous escape, Ikhhar not only ensured the babies were safely evacuated but also didn't forget to put 'billas' (labels) on them for identification later. She also immediately turned the jumbo oxygen cylinders off to avert a major tragedy in the absence of required firefighting facility and manpower.

The rescued babies, from one to 15-day-old, included four males and five females, who have now been shifted to the general ward of the department.

Insiders said Savita was alone in the ward at the time. She had just come out after feeding a baby and was stunned to see the electrical panel with the MCB go up in flames. The department doesn't have any fire alarm or firefighting equipment. So, she screamed for help. But Savita realized it might be too late, and rushed inside the PBU to evacuate the babies herself.

"The short circuit crippled power supply and smoke started entering the PBU-NICU. One of the machine lamps was still working. I first grabbed four babies in both arms after putting on their tags and rushed out with them. These babies were not on

oxygen, so it was easy to move them,” she said.

Savita, a mother of two daughters, left the four babies on a gynaecology operation theatre bed nearby before running back to rescue the others. Seeing the flames, administration staff and nurses too came to help Savita evacuate the remaining five, three of whom were on oxygen.

Officials said the MCB was completely burnt and left the PBU without power. Senior and junior residents doctors too arrived at the spot after learning about the incident.

The PBU would be out of use for a week as the administration has started repairs for other works too. Following electrical repairs, the PBU will have to be fumigated, which will take two days.

One of the premature babies was referred to Government Medical College but was sent back. Authorities may shift them from general wards as per availability in the NICU ward. The PBU has capacity of six babies but nine were admitted there.

Dean Ajay Keolia said it was only a spark and not a fire incident. “Fire extinguishers were available. The PWD electrical department will find out why the short circuit took place. Voltage fluctuations are being observed at some departments for some days,” he said.

Keolia applauded the efforts of Ikhar. “The hospital is an extended family for our nursing and support,” he said.