

Cherie & Co to launch India's first mobile cancer detection unit

By Kounteya Sinha/TNN

New Delhi: India will soon have its first mobile breast cancer detection unit, thanks to London-based NRI Paul Chawla and his friends British First Lady Cherie Blair, Sarah Kennedy (wife of Liberal Democratic chief Charles Kennedy), British MPs Simon Hughes and John Prescott and former minister Baroness Amos.

The first such unit, designed by radiologist Col C S Pant and to be run by

with the disease every year. As many as 30,000 women die of it annually.

Chawla said: "There is a wall of silence surrounding breast cancer not just in India but also in the UK. Women in some of our communities in the UK are shying away from talking about an illness which can only be treated through open dialogue and this in a society where breast cancer enjoys huge government and public support. In India, the contrast is more marked, so it is our aim that with the



'For women living in rural areas of India, the launch of the mobile breast screening unit will give voice to those who may not have anyone else to champion their health'

Chawla's NGO Roko Cancer Appeal, will be launched on December 18 in Amritsar. Over the next three months, the organisation plans to launch similar detection units in several Indian states.

These fully-equipped screening units will undertake mammograms and ultrasound tests, travelling from one village to another. Breast cancer is a major disease in India. In some parts of the country, the illness is shrouded in secrecy and stigma. Over 80,000 women, most of whom suffer from lack of awareness, are diagnosed

use of the unit, women will be encouraged to put their health first."

Col Pant added: "The mobile unit costs Rs 60 lakh and has the latest equipment. Every month, we plan to check 250 women. We will soon have similar units in Delhi, Haryana and Maharashtra."

Patron Cherie Blair declared: "For women living in semi-urban and rural areas of India who may not have access to breast health services, the launch of the mobile unit will give voice to those who may not have anyone else to champion their health."