

‘Machine heart’ provides new lease of life



THE HEART treatment scenario in India is about to change with the establishment of India's first Comprehensive Heart Failure, Heart Transplant and Artificial Heart Program at the Fortis Malar Hospital in Chennai. A particularly promising therapy that can prolong the life of many with failed hearts, is the Ventricular Assist Device (VAD). This is an implantable mechanical heart pump that was originally developed as temporary device, to sustain candidates for heart transplant while they awaited

a donor heart. But today they are regarded as a viable substitute for the heart. "VADs were considered only as a bridge to transplantation but are now considered a destination therapy," says Dr Ashok Seth, Chairman, Fortis Escorts Heart Institute. However, its cost (around ₹ 80 lakhs) is the biggest constraint. But there's hope in a local model being developed by the Director of Cardiac Sciences at Fortis Malar, Dr K R Balakrishnan and his team. "We have applied for a patent for our machine and are awaiting clearances," he says.