

## Civil society calls for legislation on IDDS

By Mahtab Bashir

**ISLAMABAD:** Members of civil society including journalists at a meeting on Monday demanded of the government to immediately legislate to make addition of iodine to table salt mandatory for preventing the Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDDs).

The meeting was organised by 'The Network for Consumer Protection' to create awareness among different segments of society about the IDDs.

It aimed at discussing ways and means particularly with the journalists to educate masses on the subject. Media men present on the occasion actively participated in the deliberations.

Participants opined that a delegation comprising newsmen and representatives from the network should meet parliamentarians to enlist their support for legislation on IDDs.

They recommended that electronic media should play its role vigorously in this regard. It was also suggested that newspapers' editors should also be taken on board in order to achieve the objectives.

The participants proposed to hold next meeting in the last week of April. The journalists agreed to ensure continuous coverage of the issue and pledged to work hard for creating awareness among people.

Prizes were awarded to three journalists on the occasion for their contribution to the cause. Fauzia Azam of The Nation was awarded the first prize. Yawar Abbas of APP got the second and Umer Daraz of Dawn News TV won the third prize.

Addressing the participants, chief guest Adnan Rehmat from Inter Media observed that media was a driving force. "It is increasing in size and offers great opportunities for creating awareness on

social issues," he noted. He called for including journalists in the campaign against IDDs.

Sheba Afghani from UNICEF, in her remarks, called for a sustained campaign to highlight the issue in its proper perspective. She stressed that media should focus its energies only on one point and that is to get law passed on IDDs. She also spoke about efforts made by the UNICEF to address the issue.

Earlier, Network Executive Director Dr Arif Azad welcoming the participants said IDDs were preventable. "Due to the government's inaction, however, large number of children fall prey to these ailments. Approximately two million children annually are born mentally deficient due to deficiency of iodine in their pregnant mothers," he added.

Azad called for swift legislation in this regard and asked media to help the government.