

Ministry likely to issue Breastfeeding Ord

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ISLAMABAD - Ministry of Health has finally woken up from the deep slumber, as it has sent the long overdue rules and regulations on the 'Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance' to printing press and after printing, the law would be formally notified in the official gazette, TheNation reliably learnt on Monday.

According to the well-placed sources in the Ministry, Secretary Health Kushnood Lashari has recently taken strict notice with regard to delaying in notification of the rules, which were already approved by the Ministry.

"A couple of days back, the rules were sent to printing press in Karachi, which were finalised by the Ministry after a lapse of seven years", sources further maintained.

According to sources, notification for these rules and regulations was due since long and it was necessary for effective

implementation of the said ordinance. However, the notification of the rules is being seen as a ray of hope in the present scenario since the ordinance was promulgated in the backdrop of the fast decline in breastfeeding practice in Pakistan.

The decline in breastfeeding practice ultimately contributed to the increase in infant mortality, which stands at 78 per 1,000 live births. Out of these, 57 are those who die before reaching their first month due to diarrhoea, pneumonia, respiratory infections and malnutrition. A major source of these diseases is lack of exclusive breastfeeding, use of unhygienic bottles and formula milk.

But still health experts believe that implementation of the said rules without notification of the Infant Feeding Board, proposed to be established to monitor and register violations of the ordinance, would affect the process of implementation of the rules.

The rules were approved around one month back, but the mounting pressure of the formula milk manufacturer tied the Ministry's hand to announce the formal notification. The 'Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance' was promulgated in 2002, but for effective implementation of the said law, rules and regulation were considered must.

And it was also due to the influence of the industry that the Ministry withdrew the decision of notifying the rules regulations on the pretext that the implementation of the ordinance could only be possible after declaring the child milk formula equal to drugs.

The issue became further complicated when the Ministry bosses came up with a decision to declare infant formula milk as drug through amendment in the Drug Act 1976, as it considered the ordinance could not effectively be implemented without changing the said Act.