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Promotion of breast-feeding Govt urged to notify rules

OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD- The National Alliance for Promotion and Protection of Breast-feeding has criticized the Ministry of Health for delaying the notification of the much-awaited rules and regulations of Protection of Breast-feeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002.

In Pakistan, 77 infants die out of 1000 every year. Out of these 57 die before reaching the age of one month due to diarrhea, pneumonia, respiratory infections and malnutrition. A major source of these diseases is lack of exclusive breastfeeding use of unhygienic bottles, formula milk and teats said Dr Sadia Assad Programme Manger, TheNetwork for Consumer Protection.

"So keeping in view the above-mentioned facts, the

National Alliance for Promotion and Protection of Breast-feeding is continuously urging the government to notify the rules and regulations" she added "As it would be a crucial step towards implementation of this ordinance and it would contribute enormously improving, mother and child health" she continued.

She maintained that these infants can be saved by implementing the breast-feeding law but the delay in framing the rules has created issues related to non-compliance of the ordinance. It is pertinent to mention here that the government of Pakistan had passed the "Protection of Breast-feeding and Young Child Nutrition Ordinance" in 2002 to protect breast-feeding practice from the commercial onslaught of the industry and to fulfil inter-

national commitments.

Dripping with irony the ministry of health despite having the draft of these rules and regulations proposed by health experts is reluctant in notifying it due to the unknown reasons. Consequently, the provisions of the legislation has remained on the ministry's shelves, and no action has been taken yet ignoring the fact that notification of rules and regulations are necessary for the implementation of any law.

Dr Arif Azad, Chief Executive Officer, TheNetwork for Consumer Protection said that Pakistan lags behind than other south Asian countries in health indicators regarding child and maternal mortality.

"Protection of Breast-feeding and Young Child Nutrition Ordinance" was a step in right direction in minimising child

and mortality rate.

Since, then there has been a lamentable delay in issuing notification of rules and regulations that are crucial for the implementation of the ordinance. The government should act speedily by notifying rules and regulations in coming days; time is of the essence now. Further delay would set us further back on achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs- 1, 3, 4).

According to independent statistics the exclusive breastfeeding rate in Pakistan is the lowest among South Asian region, which is 37.1 percent only. Where as the rate of bottle-feeding is higher in Pakistan in south Asian region, which is 32.1 percent. These indications are very thought provoking as well as shameful for the health managers.