

Breastfeeding single best way to combat infant mortality

Our correspondent
Islamabad

More than 50 per cent child deaths in Pakistan can be attributed to causes related to malnutrition, said Deputy Director General of the Nutrition Wing of the Ministry of Health Dr. Baseer Khan Achakzai.

He stated this while addressing a preparatory meeting of the National Alliance for Promotion and Protection of Breastfeeding (NAPBF) here on Thursday.

Organised by TheNetwork for Consumer Protection, which is holding the Secretariat of (NAPBF), Achakzai said the government is committed to implementation of the Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Rules, which were notified in October 2009. Achakzai urged the civil society and health professionals to participate in promoting breastfeeding among mothers.

Responding to a query about imposition of a complete ban on breast milk substitute

(BMS) formulas, Achakzai rejected the idea and said the 2002 ordinance and subsequent rules can play an important role in discouraging BMS.

The meeting of National Alliance represented by 22 civil society organisations was called to prepare the agenda of activities that will be unveiled during the breastfeeding week on the theme 'Breastfeeding — Just 10 Steps! The Baby-Friendly Way, from August 1 to 7.

The alliance partners, ranging from health professionals, civil society activists from NRSP, SUNGI, Save the Children UK, Save the Children US, Batool Foundation, Plan Pakistan, BEHBUD Association of Pakistan, Rasti Pakistan, PAIMAN, Family Health Hospital, IMDC, UNICEF, Micronutrient Initiative, WFP, Holy Family Hospital, Social Security Hospital, Poly Clinic and Fauji Foundation Hospital participated in the meeting and pledged to participate in the BF Week to highlight the importance of breastfeeding. Sheeba Afghani of

UNICEF said the Week is a good opportunity to create awareness among people about breastfeeding. She said the national alliance has come a long way since its creation and praised its role in BF Rules' notification. Various doctors present on the occasion said that still the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding was low in Pakistan and the government, along with civil society, should continue efforts to increase it.

The participants agreed on a set of activities for the global BF Week to commemorate the cause concurrently with more than 140 countries around the world. Dr Aisha of TheNetwork presented the activities of the Alliance in the last two years, contributing to the Protection of breastfeeding. The Nutrition Coordinator emphasized the importance of cooperative consolidated approach by various stakeholders such as civil society, media, policy makers and health professionals to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).