DAWN

Breastfeeding's benefits for mother-child health stressed

ISLAMABAD, Aug 6: Health experts have stressed that breastfeeding in the first six months after birth is a must to control neonatal and infant mortality rate by up to 22 per cent in the country.

Addressing a consultative meeting on "Breastfeeding: a key element in achieving Millennium Development Goals" here on Monday, the medical professionals said breastfeeding practices can improve the health of both the mother and child.

The meeting organised by The Network for Consumer Protection discussed the prospects of a strategy to promote breastfeeding practices among community, implementation of the breastfeeding ordinance and its monitoring and linkages with the MDGs.

Director General Health Maj-Gen (retired) Shahida Malik said unfortunately the rate of breastfeeding practices in developing countries was very low compared to developed countries.

She said the Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002 had been promulgated in the country which needed proper implementation.

She said the rules under the breastfeeding ordinance would soon be finalised after which an action plan would be drawn.

She said several steps had been taken at all levels to crate awareness among mothers regarding effects of breastfeeding practices on child particularly in the early six months after birth.

Country director WHO, Dr Khalif Bile Mohammad said all health professionals should have proper understanding of the importance of breastfeeding exclusively in the early six months.

He said baby-friendly hospitals can play an important role in motivating mothers regarding significance of breastfeeding.

He said coordinated efforts were needed to create awareness at the tehsil and district levels for the promotion of breastfeeding practices.

Other speakers were of the view that LHWs and other health workers can play an important role in dissemination of information on positive effects of breastfeeding practices. —Agencies