

DAWN

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Breastfeeding week from August 1

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD, July 29: Like other parts of the world, the Breastfeeding Week would be celebrated across Pakistan from August 1 to 7.

In Pakistan, the infant mortality rate is 74 per 1000 live births indicating that around 400,000 babies are likely to die during their first year of life.

According to estimates 11 per cent deaths take place due to diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections.

However, 22 per cent of all neonatal deaths could be prevented if newborn are breastfed within one hour of the birth.

However, due to ignorance among general population, unethical market practices by the corporate sector involved in selling artificial feeding products, the percentage of breastfeeding is very low in Pakistan.

Dr Talib Lashari, Executive Coordinator of TheNetwork for Consumer Protection in Pakistan, said the Breastfeeding Week would be celebrated all over Pakistani this year including the federal capital and other big cities, states an official announcement issued here on Saturday.

He said week-long drive of mass awareness and advocacy would be lunched by TheNetwork for Consumer Protection.

About 3000 members of TheNetwork would participate in this drive. Posters will be distributed at health facilities by the members of the organisation to create awareness among mother and families about the value of breastfeeding.

The organisation will also organise a consultative meeting on the theme of "Breastfeeding: A key element for achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)".

According to health experts, breastfeeding can reduce infant mortality in Pakistan. This will also help in achieving Millennium Development Goals number one and four.

The Goal 1 calls for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and Goal 4 calls for reducing child mortality by reducing by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.

Dr Lashari said the government of Pakistan had promulgated the "Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002". The ordinance protects the first right of a baby consumer-citizen to have mother's milk since first hour of birth.

However, there are many hurdles in implementation of the ordinance. The required rules and regulations are yet to be framed.