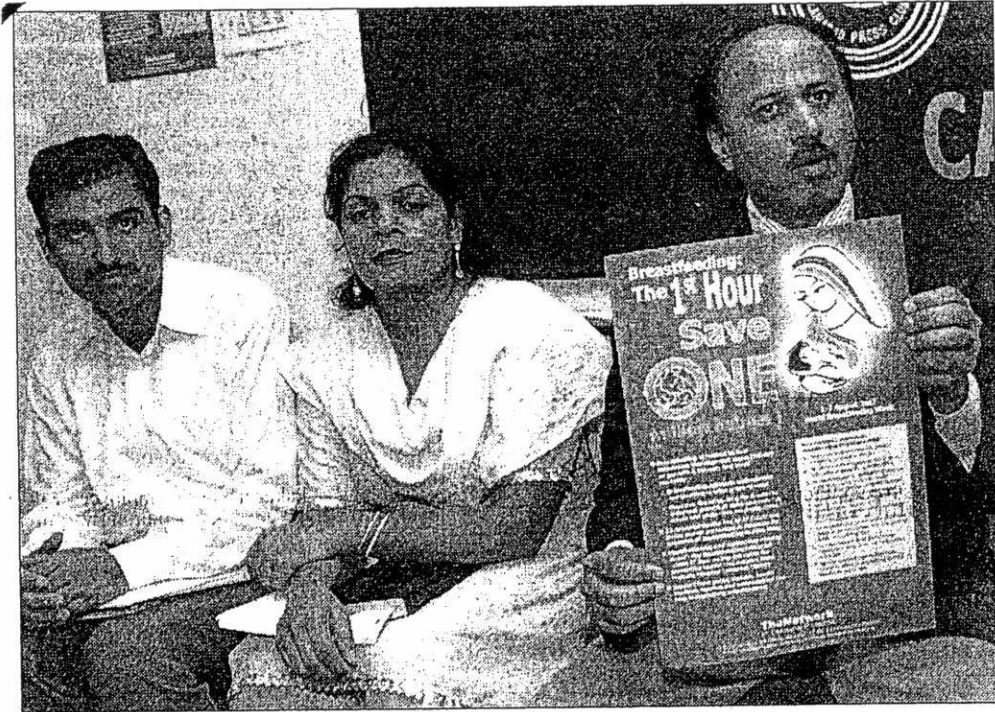


# Pakistan OBSERVER

Date: 02:08:2007

Station: Islamabad



ISLAMABAD: Executive Coordinator, The Network for Consumer Protection, Dr Talib Lashari addressing press conference at Press Club Camp Office Wednesday.—PO photo

## Breastfeeding natural defence to infants

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ISLAMABAD—The Network for Consumer Protection denounces the unethical promotion of breast milk substitutes which is one of the reasons responsible for the reduction of breastfeeding of infants. As per international laws baby formula milk cannot be promoted unethically in a way that it would undermine the importance of mother's milk for a baby.

"Breastfeeding is the ideal way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development", The Network's Executive Coordinator Dr. Talib Lashari said while addressing a press conference here on Wednesday at the beginning of the World Breastfeeding Week, August 1 to 7, 2007.

Dr. Talib Lashari said that in context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which Pakistan is a signatory that the MDGs related to breastfeeding can be achieved by promoting exclusive

breastfeeding is initiated within one hour by all mothers, which reduces 22 percent neonatal deaths. "The Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002, promulgated by the Government of Pakistan in October 2002 protects the right of an infant to have mother's milk since first hour of birth. However, there are many hurdles in implementation of the Ordinance", he remarked.

Dr. Lashari said that according to various studies, non-breastfed children have higher risk of urinary tract infections, illnesses and even non-infectious diseases like insulin dependent diabetes mellitus. "According to recent studies, in Pakistan, out of 1000 live births, 78 infants die before reaching their first birthday. And out of 1000 live births, 94 children die before reaching to their fifth birthday", he added.

Dr. Lashari stated that breastfeeding is a natural defense provided to infants and children of 2 years of age. "Unfortunately, lack

of knowledge; illiteracy; ignorance; unethical marketing practices by baby milk substitute manufacturers and weak implementation of existing laws are the major factors in non-initiation of exclusive breastfeeding.

It is a proven fact that breastfeeding can reduce infant and child morbidity and mortality". On the conclusion Dr. Lashari said that "It is utmost important that exclusive breastfeeding should be given top priority in health policy and planning within the health sector of Pakistan. It would be timely to include breastfeeding initiation as an indicator for measuring preventive health.

The Network for Consumer Protection is well aware of its responsibilities in this regard. It has traditionally played an active role in the formulation of Breastfeeding Ordinance and related steps. We intend to reinforce mass awareness activities with regard to initiation of exclusive breastfeeding during 1st hour of birth".