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General

Breastfeeding may prevent 13pc death of children

Experts tell int'l meet

Staff Correspondent

Experts at a meeting yesterday called for exclusive breastfeeding for proper mental and physical growth of children.

They said breastfeeding for six months could prevent 13 percent death of children under five.

The three- day international meeting has been jointly organised by South Asian International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation (BBF) and National Nutrition Programme (NNP) at Mohakhali in the city.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said 48 percent of the children under five are underweight while 43 percent are stunted.

He said the children continue to suffer from malnutrition due to lack of exclusive breastfeeding.

The minister stressed the need for political will, public investment, awareness among health workers, and involvement of families to promote breastfeeding to achieve millennium goals in South Asia.

He also highlighted the government initiatives to reduce child malnutrition.

Dr Arun Gupta, regional coordinator of IBFAN, said exclusive breastfeeding is good both for mother and child.

"It is unfortunate that we are not investing money for the children when their brain develops in first three years," he added.

IBFAN South Asia and BBF Chairman Prof MQK Talukder,

Unicef South Asia representative I J Uhaa, and WHO representative in Bangladesh Dr George John Kombakono also spoke.

A total of 60 representatives from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the host Bangladesh are taking part in the meeting.