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World Breastfeeding Week

Breastfeeding: best way to provide infants with nutrients they need.

World Breastfeeding Week is marked every year from 1st to 7th August to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of babies throughout the world. World Breastfeeding Week was first celebrated in 1992 by World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) and is now observed in over 120 countries by UNICEF, WHO and their partners including individuals, organizations, and governments.

Breastfeeding is the best way to provide infants with the nutrients they need. WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding starting within one hour after birth and a baby is 6 months old. Nutrition complementary foods should then be added while continuing to breastfeed for up to 2 years or beyond.

This year, WHO is working with UNICEF and partners to promote the importance of helping mothers breastfeed their babies within that crucial first hour of life. Skin-to-skin contact along with nuzzling at the breast stimulate the production of breast milk, including colostrum, also-called the baby's "first vaccine", which is extremely rich in nutrients and antibodies.

It is very necessary to the mothers to get timely support and healthcare education to their baby including breast feeding. The continuous support and stimulation can bring the gradual and permanent changes in the social living and ultimately healthy and disease free social living.

Breastfeeding has lots of benefits to both newborn baby and mother. The following are some benefits of breastfeeding:

- Breast milk contains everything your baby needs for the first six months of life, with the possible exception of vitamin D. The first milk is thick, rich in protein and loaded with beneficial compounds.
- Breast milk is loaded with antibodies, especially immunoglobins, which can help prevent or fight illness in your baby.
- Breastfeeding may reduce your baby's risk of infections and many diseases, including allergy, colic, disease and diabetes.
- Breastfeeding may affect your baby's brain development and reduce the risk of future behavior and learning problems.
- Breastfeeding may make weight loss harder for the first 3 months after delivery. However, it may actually help with weight loss after the first 3 months.
- Breastfeeding increases oxytocin production, a hormone that causes contractions in the uterus. It reduces blood loss after delivery and helps the uterus return to its pre-pregnancy size.
- Breastfeeding mothers are less likely to develop post-partum depression. The hormone oxytocin, which encourages caregiving, relaxation and bonding between mother and child.
- Breastfeeding for more than one year is linked to a 28% lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer. It has also been linked to a reduced risk of several other diseases.

Lathum Noori

Editorial

Afghans welcome any move leading to peace

The US has frequently been rejecting direct talks with the Taliban, in a move to let Afghans to determine their own destiny, but in a reversal of its longstanding policy, American diplomats held a face-to-face talk with the group's representatives.

The meeting was reportedly held in Qatar, almost a week ago, to facilitate direct talks of the Afghan government with Taliban. Report about the two sides meeting went viral in the world media, as they were surprised how the Taliban who were blaming foreign forces to be behind any instability and insecurity in Afghanistan, have now become ready to meet with.

However, the US state department has not still confirmed whether the talks took place, but it did not deny American diplomats had taken part in such a talk that can be assessed as an important shift in the US strategy toward the rebels.

During the past three days of Eid, after the government announced a unilateral truce, which was practiced by the Taliban, only during the religious ceremony, the people of Afghanistan become optimistic about the most likely peace negotiations to be started between the government and the Taliban.

This was believed that the Taliban were fed up with such a long-standing meaningless war and killing innocent people and have now realized they have no option except accepting joining peace table with the government and taking part in the country's reconstruction process.

The US has time and again announced that any negotiations over the Afghanistan political future would take place between the Afghan government and the Taliban and that the country's president, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has said the government was fully prepared even with no pre-conditions to sit around a negotiation table with the Taliban - a move would help conflict end and peace and stability restored.

According to The New York Times, the Taliban, by two of their representatives have confirmed the talks and that the meeting "took place in Doha, where the Taliban have long maintained a political office (not recognized by the government of Afghanistan) for the purpose of restarting peace process."

"The talks involved several members of the Taliban political commission and Alex Wells, the State Department's senior South Asia diplomat, as well as other unidentified American diplomats, according to the two Taliban officials," the American based newspaper said referring to its website, recently.

Although, according to the country's presidential office, the US peace meeting with the Taliban can only play a supportive role that would pave the way for direct negotiation with the government, but the Taliban flexibility for peace can be called a promising measure adopted by the hardliner for a bright future of peace and stability in the country.

We support peace talks with any of the government armed oppositions, but they should realize that Afghanistan only belongs to the Afghans and only the Afghans can take decision over their country and the destiny of their nations.

Any peace efforts, with the intermediation of any friendly countries is warmly welcomed by the government and people of Afghanistan.

On the other hand, the Taliban should also realize that they can only reach a result for their peace negotiation through an Afghan diplomatic channel and to put an end to bloodshed and destruction, they have to seek negotiations, after observing human rights, particularly women rights and the rights of the entire Afghans (including boys and girls) for education.

UK provides £10 million to counter drought in Afghanistan

British officials have disclosed that they would provide £10 million for counter drought in Afghanistan. The news and message is to be expected for addressing areas facing with serious threat of drought in the country.

Based on a remark of the country's International Development Agency, the new aid package will provide emergency relief and nutrition aid for people who were affected in a critical situation, including by distributing fortified wheat flour, vegetable oil, pulses, salt and other nutrition foods to prevent malnutrition.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt, announcing the aid on Monday in Kabul, said: "The drought in Afghanistan is an unfolding crisis, with 1.4 million people's lives at risk when this year's harvest falls in a number of provinces in only a matter of weeks."

A statement from the British embassy quoted here as saying other countries to join the international effort to support some of the world's most vulnerable people. The statement added that more than 44,000 people were in critical situation due to severe drought in Afghanistan and they would be benefited from the UK new aid package.

The UK support is part of a response being coordinated by the United Nations and government of Afghanistan.

Previously, officials for State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs by expressing concern over severe drought and life conditions of those displaced due to drought in the country had said: "MAH, MDRR, MoPH and MoRR have been tasked to take necessary preventive steps towards addressing drought-affected families in the country."

Based on official statistics of the government, 20 provinces in particular (Ghor, Badkush, Fariab, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan and Jawzjan) have been affected by severe drought. But, Shera Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs, stressed that the ministry was making effort to prevent displacement of drought-affected families to other provinces of the country.

Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) preparations to address areas which are facing with threat of severe drought.

MAIL has taken all necessary preparations to provide animal grains to drought-affected provinces so that they can prevent from further loss of livestock," a spokesperson for MAIL added.

A number of Afghan experts consider increasing investments and ongoing work, cutting forests, lack of seasonal rainfall as causes of severe drought in some provinces of the country.

"Unfortunately, the government of Afghanistan has not taken any particular program in hand to address drought in the country. It is necessary that the government should coordinate with donors for drought-affected families and prevent from displacement of these families to other provinces, or they will have their lives threaten and migrate to other provinces," an Afghan expert Mohammad Mulyadi said.

He added that the threat of drought was a threat of terrorism that can make society unsafe, therefore, particular programs should be taken in this regard.

Based on a report released by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA), nearly 70% of Afghanistan's soil is facing with severe drought and approximately 1.2 million people affected by the drought in the country.

Shera Balkhizi



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