

Breastfeeding rate has risen 10pc over past 20 years

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EVIDENCE has proven that breastfeeding can save the lives of millions of infants and young children worldwide, help them avoid common infectious diseases and prevent the development of non-communicable diseases such as obesity and diabetes in adulthood.

This was shared by Her Royal Highness Princess Hajah Masna in her sabda during the opening ceremony of the 10th One Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forum at the Al-'Afiah Hall of the Ministry of Health yesterday.

The sabda highlighted that food insecurity and malnutrition are still rampant in many parts of the world and have claimed millions of lives.

“Malnutrition also causes many debilitating chronic diseases which can progress from childhood to adulthood. Sadly, more than half the deaths among children under the age of five worldwide could have been prevented with the availability of safe and nutritious food,” Her Royal Highness said.

However, considerable progress has been made in Asia over the past decade where more women are surviving pregnancy and childbirth resulting in more children living to celebrate their fifth birthday.



Her Royal Highness went on to say that more concerted efforts and closer cooperation among stakeholders are needed in order to eliminate the preventable deaths of infants and young children where mothers need to receive good nutrition so their babies can thrive during gestation and after birth.

“It is therefore imperative that maternal and infant nutrition is addressed as an integral part of global and national health policies. We must also be aware of the marketing influences, including those which are channelled through mass media that can undermine breastfeeding”.

In this regard Her Royal Highness noted that Brunei Darussalam has adopted a recommendation from the World Health Organisation called the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes to protect and promote breastfeeding.

The Ministry of Health is committed to implementing this international code which will put in place a comprehensive policy framework to ensure the provision of safe and optimal nutrition for this target group.

The rate of breastfeeding in Brunei has increased from less than 15 per cent two decades ago to the current figure of 26 per cent. Her Royal Highness commended the continuous efforts of the ministry in working together with other institutions and non-government organisations to increase this rate further through various initiatives including the baby-friendly hospital initiative.

Furthermore, Her Royal Highness noted that the ministry is also setting up accessible, conducive and well-equipped rooms for the use of mothers in the ministry’s facilities and is encouraging commercial establishments to support this initiative by providing similar facilities on their premises.

“Additionally, I wish to specifically mention the important role of community and family institutions in supporting these initiatives. Community health programmes and participation is a crucial pillar of any national health policy.”

The national strategy roadmap will require the full support and active involvement of the government and non-government sectors as well as the larger community to ensure its successful implementation.

Her Royal Highness concluded her sabda by stressing the importance of research, sourcing of evidence and exploration of innovations, saying, “Needless to say, it is extremely important to generate evidence from research to address the gap, to refine the knowledge and to realign the health programmes in order to further improve the maternal infant and young children landscape, not only in Brunei Darussalam but also in the global context.”