

CM to better mortality rate ^{Hd}

The Asian Age 16th Jan 2009

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Jan. 15: Maharashtra may take pride on having a reasonably low mortality rate, but the state government has resolved to lower it further. This decision came almost soon after a United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) report that stated that Maharashtra is the state with the third lowest ratio of mortality rate (per lakh births) in the country.

Stressing on the importance of setting up a special task force for the cause, Mr Chavan said, "Though the infant and maternal mortality

ratio is comparatively lower in the cities, we must bring it down further. Maharashtra is known as a progressive state and we must work towards completely eradicating infant and maternal mortality."

Following the CM's directions, the state government will set up a special task force to bring down the

mortality rate in the state.

The Unicef report appreciated the efforts taken by the state in reducing infant mortality

"While the infant mortality rate fell from 48 per 1,000 in 2001 to 34 per 1,000 in 2006, malnutrition among children under the age of three years, fell from 49.6 per cent in 1998 to 40 per cent in 2005," the report stated.

However, the Unicef has also pointed out problematic areas and assured that the organisation will help the state government in improving the conditions in these areas. The report said that reaching children in

urban slums and tribal belts is a major challenge, because of a poor outreach system. Gopinath Menon, state representative, Unicef said, "The malnutrition cases have come down by 9.6 per cent from 1998 to 2005. This was the steepest decrease in the country. Similarly, the infant mortality ratio in Maharashtra was hovering around 47-48 for many years. But our 2006 survey showed that it has come down to 34, which is again one of the best in the country. But there are some areas like Melghat, tribal areas of Nandurbar and Thane district that require special attention."