



Rajendra Pratap Gupta
President

February 21, 2011.

Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad
Minister of Health & Family Welfare
Nirmal Bhawan, New Delhi - 110108

Subject: For Immediate action-banning of toys given as free gifts with food products & drinks, & framing guidelines on Child Health & Preventive care

Hon'ble Minister,

I am writing this important petition on behalf of the Disease Management Association of India - DMAI; The Population Health Improvement Alliance. DMAI is founded by global healthcare leaders to help improve the population health in India by focusing on the entire continuum of care.

In November 2010, during my visit to the US, I was with Senator Tom Daschle (Senator Tom was nominated as Health & Human Services Secretary by President Obama, which he declined, and is often referred to as a senior Advisor & Mentor to President Obama). During the discussion, he asked me; how is India a better bet than China? I told him that, in the next three decades, while India will have majority of working age population, China will have one working person and three retired persons. This should put China in serious productivity issue!! India is the youngest nation today, with an average age of approximately 25.9 years, and this is often referred to as a 'demographic dividend'.

While statistically, India is having a tremendous demographic dividend, if we do not attend to the 'Child Health' as a top priority, our demographic dividend will become a 'Demographic Disaster', as our working population would be 'Unhealthy' and thus drastically impact the productivity of the nation. This is the biggest hurdle for India to attend, if we need to overtake China in the long term for being a developed & a vibrant economy.

For Immediate action: Media has proliferated & children have dedicated channels on TV. They watch T.V., which is flooded with animated cartoons & other Sci-fi serials, and children get fascinated with such shows. The companies have started giving the characters associated with these shows as free gifts to entice the children to buy their food products and drinks. So children force their parents to buy the food stuff or drinks just for the sake of these 'Freebies', and they also consume these products, so that the parents do not scold them for spending so much on these food items!! Due to this, our children are fast becoming obese & unhealthy!! Just for the sake of an example, I am quoting my son who buys McDonald's 'Happy Meal' just for the sake of getting the toy that comes free with it & I can see that he is least interested in the meal, but then he consumes the 'Burger', and 'Cold Drinks'

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that comes with the 'Happy Meals' to ensure that next time he gets a chance to buy the Happy Meal from Mc Donald again and most importantly , get the free toy . He already weighs 40 KG at the age of 7 years. Luckily, he has joined the Gym with me. But imagine, the severely 'Obese' children that are a result of such 'Unhealthy' Promotions with food products meant for children. I have just quoted Mc Donald for the sake of example, but we have most of the companies selling 'Unhealthy foods' with promotions aimed at enticing children, playing for their ignorance and their intense desire for playing with toys!

Through this note, I call upon the policy makers to ban such toys and also the advertisements related to such promotions in national media with immediate affect. I also call upon the 'responsible' companies to sell & market their products for 'nutritional value' and not on 'Unhealthy promotions' or 'Freebies'. Also, the MOHFW should come up with "hand book on Preventive Healthcare for Children" below 12 years

If we fail to take immediate and strict action now, our future generations will grow up to curse this generation for inaction, and the nation will be burdened by poor productivity and high healthcare costs with no signs of health ! It is a call to action .

I do look forward to prompt action on the same from all the concerned. If the policy makers fail to take action, DMAI will initiate a nation-wide campaign for such 'unhealthy promotions'.

With best regards

CC.

Sonia Gandhi

Rahul Gandhi

Dr.Manmohan Singh

Dr.Murli Mahohar Joshi

Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad

Min. for information & Broad Casting

Montek Singh Ahluwalia

Dr.Syeda Hameed.

Shri L.K.Advani

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