

HEALTH

Amitabh Bachchan's Partnership With Horlicks Has Public Health Experts Alarmed

In 2014, Bachchan had renounced his association with Pepsi. Health campaigners hope he will do the same with GSK's Horlicks.



Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan at an event. Credit: Reuters



The Wire Staff

352
interactions



HEALTH 14 HOURS AGO

New Delhi: On May 30, Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan tweeted thrice about how he is gearing up to work with GlaxoSmithKline's brand Horlicks to tackle undernutrition in India.

"I am taking the 1st step by joining the biggest movement to fight malnutrition," he said.

He copied his tweet to Horlicks and the media group Network18, as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union minister for women and child development Maneka Gandhi, CEO of NITI Aayog Amitabh Kant and the government's own programme for undernutrition, Poshan Abhiyaan.



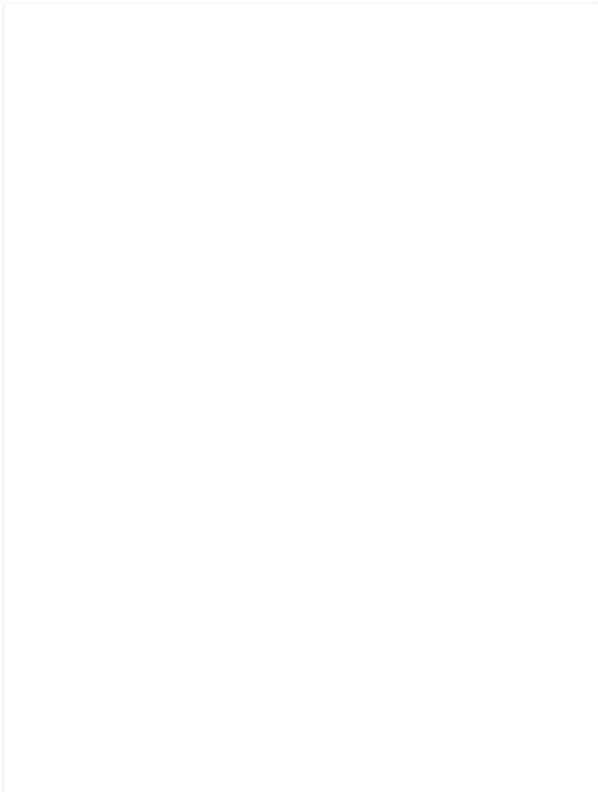
Amitabh Bachchan
@SrBachchan

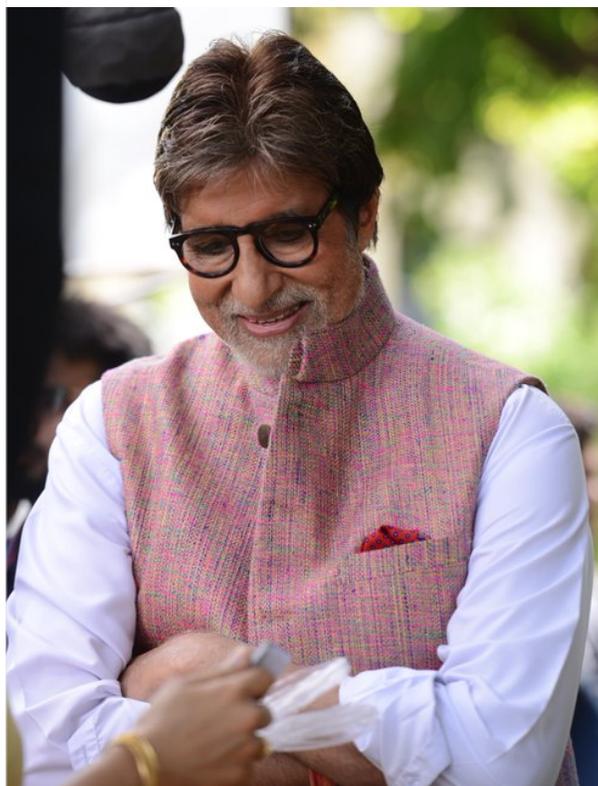
T 2823 -

I am taking the 1st step by joining the biggest movement to fight malnutrition @MissionPoshan, @Network18Group and @Horlicks_india to support India's Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyaan @MissionPoshan @narendramodi @Manekagandhibjp @NITIAayog @amitabhk87 @PoshanAbhiyaan.

8:58 AM - May 31, 2018

12.1K 1,690 people are talking about this





This flurry of tweets have led to a number of public health experts to write to the film star, asking him to quit his association with Horlicks due to its high sugar content and its high price. According to them, this move could become a burden on low-income families who would be encouraged to consume Horlicks due to Bachchan’s endorsement.

Bachchan has earlier withdrawn his endorsement for unhealthy products – in 2014, he renounced his association with Pepsi.

With his recent tweets, he was lending his support to a new campaign by Horlicks, the GSK brand which makes the malted drink targeted at children. Horlicks’s campaign is called ‘Mission Poshan’, and the motto is: “We are here to fight the malnutrition in our country.”



The recent poster released for 'Mission Poshan'. Credit: Facebook

In fact, the campaign title is very similar to the Indian government's own programme known as 'Poshan Abhiyaan'.

Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest, a national think tank on nutrition, has **written an open letter** to Bachchan and it has been signed by well-known experts in public health including Keshav Desiraju (former union health secretary), Vandana Prasad (paediatrician), Arun Gupta (child health activist and doctor) and KP Kushwaha (paediatrician and former principle of BRD Medical College, Gorakhpur).

Horlicks' claims are 'scientifically unsubstantiated'

"Amitabh Bachchan's association with Horlicks can be harmful. Sugar has no nutritional value whatsoever. It is a major cause of obesity and there is increasing evidence that added sugar increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and fatty liver," says Dr. Aseem Malhotra, an internationally known campaigner for healthy foods.

The letter also says that Horlicks' claims are not backed by science: "In 2016, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted a Resolution that recommended ending inappropriate promotion of foods for children from ages 6–36 months based on WHO and FAO dietary guidelines. Going by this recommendation promotion of Horlicks falls in category of "inappropriate" as they use false health claims in TV commercials. It is neither good food nor nutrition, it is just a high sugar product, what now a days is called empty calories."

Horlicks has a page on their website called '**The Science Inside**'. On it, they say their product supports immunity, builds bone area and muscle, improves concentration, helps make healthier blood and allows for healthy weight gain. They say they are "a leading force in the 'Science of Food'."

"Promotion of Horlicks stating that it helps kids in gaining height, weight, brain development and the healthy immune system is inappropriate as these claims are scientifically unsubstantiated," said Dr J.P. Dadhich, a paediatrician in Delhi.

Major media organisation and social media influencers enlisted

Horlick's campaign appears to be partnering with media giant Network18, which has been advertising this campaign across their various media outlets.



News18 Odia
@News18Odia

#DidYouKnow half of India's children are undernourished? Join the fight against malnutrition...#MissionPoshan campaign with @Network18Group along with @Horlicks_india & @SrBachchan

1:09 PM - Jun 5, 2018

A number of social media influencers, who have thousands of followers but are not known to speak about health issues, have also been enlisted to lend steam to the campaign. These include beauty bloggers, motivational speakers, sports bloggers and other anonymous accounts.

 **Pooja Mittal**
@beingpooja18

One major hurdle that is effecting India's future, our children is Malnutrition! [@Horlicks_India](#) along with [@SrBachchan](#) and [@MissionPoshan](#) is taking steps to fight malnutrition and keep our kids healthy and strong! [#MissionPoshan](#) [@Network18Group](#) [@PoshanAbhiyaan](#) [@CNBC_Awaaz](#)

8:20 PM - May 31, 2018

31 59 people are talking about this

 **RISHABH SURANA**
@rishabhanalyst

Anyone who does anything to help a child is a hero to me – I'm joining [@MissionPoshan](#), [@Horlicks_India](#), [@Network18Group](#) and [@SrBachchan](#) to fight malnutrition and keep our kids healthy and strong! [#MissionPoshan](#) [@CNBCTV18News](#) [@CNBC_Awaaz](#)

8:18 PM - May 31, 2018

54 100 people are talking about this

 **Adrine D'mello**
@mooziek

What a brilliant initiative by [@MissionPoshan](#) [@Horlicks_india](#) who team up with [@SrBachchan](#) to fight malnutrition and put and end to it in India! [#MissionPoshan](#) [@Network18Group](#) [@CNNnews18](#)

7:35 PM - May 31, 2018 · Noida, India

29 50 people are talking about this

 **Sir Jenkinson**
@theEpicGooner

Great initiative by [@MissionPoshan](#), [@Horlicks_India](#), [@SrBachchan](#) for the children in India which will help them to get right amount of nutrition. Well done! [#MissionPoshan](#)

7:30 PM - May 31, 2018

27 51 people are talking about this

 **Jagrati Shukla**
@JagratiShukla29

Half of all Indian children are malnourished. A fact that should make us pause, reflect and support an initiative for change. Great to see [@Horlicks_india](#) [@SrBachchan](#) and [@Network18Group](#) making a difference with [@MissionPoshan](#). [#MissionPoshan](#)

9:03 PM - May 31, 2018

271 122 people are talking about this

 Support The Wire 

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ₹10 This report | ₹200 1 month | ₹2400 1 year |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|

*PG Fees addl.

