

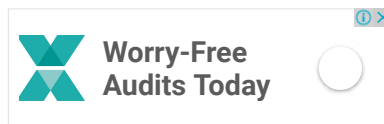


Public health experts ask Amitabh Bachchan to dissociate with Horlicks

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Amitabh Bachchan. (Photo: Twitter)



NEW DELHI: A group of prominent nutritionists and public health experts have slammed Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan for associating with “Horlicks”—a multinational brand that has rendered support to Centre’s recently launched National Nutrition Mission.

Calling Bachchan’s association with Horlicks—a “sugary product” as “shocking”, the group—Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest- has said that sugary solution is a myth for tackling under-nutrition in India.

“Horlicks is a high sugar product, as 100 gram of a popularly advertised pack of Horlicks Delight, contains 78 gram of carbohydrates of which 32 grams is sucrose sugar,” a letter that has been sent to Bachchan said.

“This development reeks of conflict of interest as Horlicks by announcing its support for a mega government scheme is looking to indulge into a brand building exercise and will have far-reaching repercussions,” Arun Gupta, convenor NAPI told TNIE.

“This (Horlicks) is harmful for children as it may contribute to childhood obesity and non communicable disease in later life,” the letter read. “We hope you are aware that WHO recommends a reduced daily intake of free sugars throughout the life course to less than 10 per cent of total energy intake.”

“Furthermore, in the interest of good health WHO suggests intake of free sugars to below 5 per cent of total energy intake”.

“I fear that this campaign may have serious adverse repercussions- Horlicks is expensive; is likely to drain pockets of marginalized families under the misbelief that “Horlicks” is a good nutritious product for children as it is endorsed by Mr. Bachchan,” said Aarti Maria, neonatologist at RML hospital in Delhi and a signatory to the letter.

“Thus Horlicks may displace healthy real family home foods and this way contravenes tackling the problem of under-nutrition among children.”

Keshav Desiraju, India's former health secretary who has also called for Bachchan's dissociation with the product that is marketed as a “health drink” told this paper that the “government scheme should look at options that comply good standards”.

“We believe that this campaign is misleading and undermines optimal nutrition. Big food companies are known to adopt marketing tactics that build brands by entering through the back door. Horlicks, in this case is championing the cause of nutrition,” the group has written to the actor.

The experts have reminded the actor that he should call off the association with Horlicks like he had done called off an endorsement with Pepsi in 2014 calling it an “unhealthy” drink.

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