

NUTRITION ADVOCACY IN PUBLIC INTEREST-India (NAPi)

January 29, 2024

To
Shri. Sitaram Yechury,
General Secretary,
Communist Party of India (Marxist),
A.K. Gopalan Bhawan,
27-29, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi 110 001

Subject: Seeking an appointment with you to discuss how to halt the rising consumption of Junk Food in the Indian population.

Respected Sir,

1. We write to you as a national think tank on nutrition –consisting of independent experts in epidemiology, human nutrition, community nutrition and pediatrics, medical education, administration and management; having decades of experience in respective fields; who have come together to advocate on nutrition policy in public interest.

HEALTH CRISIS IN INDIA

2. It is worrying, based on a new comprehensive epidemiological study by the Government of India “Metabolic non-communicable disease health report of India: the ICMR-INDIAB national cross-sectional study” (ICMR-INDIAB-17) published on June 7 in the *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol* 2023(Annexure 1).The report shows prevalence of diabetes to be 11.4%, (1 in 9 individuals), pre diabetes -15.3% (1 in 7 individuals), hypertension- 35.5% (1 in 3 individuals), generalised obesity- 28.6% (1 in 4 individuals, abdominal obesity -39.5% (1 in 3 individuals) and Hypercholesterolemia -24%(1 in 4). Estimated numbers of people who suffer in India are staggering; 10.1 crore of diabetics, 13.6 crore of pre-diabetics, 31 crore with high blood pressure, 25.4 crore being obese and 21.3 crore having hypercholesterolemia.

3. Obesity has been rapidly rising in India in children under -5, adult men and women. Obesity increased by almost 25% during the past 5 years. This leads to rising burden of most non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and deaths in adulthood. It estimated that 5.8 million people die from NCDs every year and the proportion of deaths due to NCDs (among all deaths) increased from 37% in 1990 to 61% in 2016. In India 56% of children between 5 to 19 years of age showed cardio-metabolic risk factors (CNNS-2016).

4. We have recently published a report titled “[The Junk Push](#)” ([Annexure 2](#)) on the rising consumption of ultra processed foods in India and the policy intervention needed to control it. The report received several national and international media attention and coverage. Few media reports are attached for your reference (Annexure 3).

Unhealthy diets are one of the leading health risk factors

5. As you may be aware that unhealthy diets in the form of junk foods or ultra-processed industrial food products; usually high in sugars, fats and salts (HFSS) Foods(as per WHO standards) are strongly linked to poor health of the people. During the past 10 years, extensive scientific evidence has found associations of increasing consumption of such food products to overweight, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, cancers, depression, and mental health issues

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(Annexure 4). Such food products disturb the very natural environment in the human gut microbiota and negatively impact the health of people through causing inflammation in the body and displacement of fresh foods (Annexure 5).

6. In India, rising consumption of such unhealthy diet has been documented and it is one of major reasons for obesity and diabetes. It is not surprising that India is witnessing a massive public health crisis. The rising consumption of unhealthy diets is **led by aggressive marketing and misleading labeling** by the food industry.

7. Obviously, this requires strong political and policy actions in order to reduce the consumption of such unhealthy diets. The key policies interventions include legal ban on advertising and marketing and health warning on the front of pack labels. These policy interventions are scientifically validated and effective in reducing the intake of unhealthy diets in the Latin American Region.

Concluding our appeal to you we suggest the following action:

Include in the manifesto of your party for the Elections 2024: Introduction of a “Bill to reduce the consumption of unhealthy diets to prevent non communicable diseases” (obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancers etc) that aims on reducing risk factors in diet and preventing NCDs.

NAPi would be pleased to assist and seek an appointment with you and the official dealing with health issues or parliament affairs.

In anticipation of a line of response.

Thank you.

You're sincerely,

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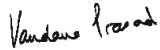
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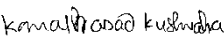
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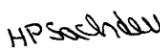
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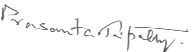
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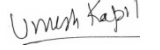

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