

Healthy initiative: Haryana first to roll out IMS Act

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Substitute of breast feeding became feasible since condensed milk was developed in 1856 and Nestle produced 'Farine Lactee' in 1867. Thanks to the marketing gurus, those infant milk substitutes spread like wildfire.

Once the developed nations realised the adverse impact of infant food substitutes, Nestle ventured new grounds in search of market in the developing nations. False health and nutrient promises soon made Nestle a common household name and breast feeding started declining in India especially given to the urbanisation that was going on in India.

Indian romance with IMS was short lived as poverty, illiteracy and poor sanitation led to spurious preparation of infant food supplement. The infant mortality rate went sky rocketing high from malnutrition, diarrhoea and pneumonia which increased exponentially.

IMS Act was passed by the Government of India in the year 1992 but alas the impact of such regulation was not widespread given to newer marketing strategy and political lobbying employed by the formula companies.

A State more in news for its khap panchayats and female foeticide rate; Haryana however is the first State to implement the IMS Act in India.

The premises of a wholesale distributor of Nestle infant milk substitute food products namely M/S Satnarayan and Company in New Grain Market, Rohatak was raided on 14 July by a team of Health Department and Food and Drug Administration, Haryana.

Rakesh Gupta, Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration, Haryana said "Team seized infant milk substitutes meant for supply to retailers in the district. The manufacturer and the seller that is distributor or retailer of such products would be booked under various sections of the Infant Milk Substitute, Feeding Bottle and Infant Food (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992, which prevents deliberate advertisement and promotion of such products in the market."

"The company is printing the graphic of feeding bottle on its label along with the advertisements of other products which is prohibited under statute. Such products are prohibited for the children below two years, however, warning is written on the labels," added Dr Gupta.

According to National Institute of Child Health and Human Development breast feeding is beneficial for an infant. Breast milk contains the right balance of nutrients to help infant grow into a strong and healthy toddler. Some of the nutrients in breast milk protect a baby against some common childhood illnesses and infections. Certain types of cancer may occur less often in mothers who have breastfed their babies.

Dr Gupta says main accused in this case could be the manufacturer and supplier of the products as the State Government has already notified to proceed against companies or dealers promoting such products under the provisions of the Act. The company could be booked under sections 3 and 6 of the Act for such a violation.

Gupta further added that "The IMS Act discourages the judicious use and promotion of milk substitutes as an alternate to mother's milk. The Act prohibits the propagation of any advertisement or participation in any kind of promotion for the distribution, sale or supply of infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles or infant foods. In no way should an impression or belief be created on anyone that feeding of infant milk substitutes or infant foods are equivalent or better than mother's milk."

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