

Press Release

CPDI Urges Prime Minister, President, and Secretary Health to Ban Unhealthy Food and Promote Healthier Options in Public Procurements

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The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) has issued an urgent appeal to the Prime Minister Mr. Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi, and Secretary National Health Services, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Shallwani, to address the increasing incidence and prevalence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Pakistan. According to recent most health statistics around 60% of deaths are attributed to NCDs such as cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. In addition, NCDs are a leading cause of not only premature mortality i.e., before the age of 70, but also these are also increasing burden of disabilities and unhealthy life years causing people huge financial losses as well as reduction in life years. Three elements are dietary risk factors, which the letter advocates against the excessive use, “the first one is use of unhealthy oils and fats, the second is added sugars in foods and drinks, and an excessive use of sodium”.

In a letter, CPDI, a non-partisan civil society organization, has urged the Prime Minister to implement concrete measures banning such unhealthy food and beverages from public procurements, official meetings, and functions. Highlighting the rising numbers of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in Pakistan due to the unregulated consumption of food containing harmful ingredients like sugar, sodium, and trans-fatty acids (TFAs) in fats, CPDI emphasizes the urgent need for intervention. Studies reveal that approximately 33 million people in Pakistan suffer from diabetes, additional 10 million are pre-diabetic, and 918 cases per 100,000 individuals are affected by cardiovascular diseases.

In the letter, CPDI proposes a comprehensive approach, urging the Prime Minister to expedite the formulation and strict implementation of mandatory standards for all food items, prohibit government institutions from procuring unhealthy food, and ban the serving of such harmful items in official settings. In addition, CPDI has urged restricting the availability of unhealthy food in schools, hospitals, and public parks, eliminating government subsidies on harmful products such as sugars and banaspati ghee, and implementing public awareness campaigns. “Provide subsidies to healthy foods so that people enjoy better health status and contribute more in the GDP as mentally and physically active citizens”, the letter urged the government.

Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, Executive Director, CPDI, expressed the hope that these measures will significantly and positively address the NCDs related public health crisis in the country. CPDI has formally requested meeting with the Prime Minister, President, and Secretary National Health Services explain the research-based findings, and the way forward for better governance of food systems in Pakistan. “Medical research shows that the national burden of diseases, deaths, and disabilities in Pakistan is changing, and we need to take serious measures to control dietary risk factors so that our healthcare system does not cave down and is able to provide quality healthcare services to the population”, he added.

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