

BBS/PoI/2005/002

January 18, 2005

Shri A. P. J. Abdul Kalam,
The President of India,
Rashtrapati Bhawan,
New Delhi

WINGS OF FIRE MUST HELP CLIP THE WINGS OF TOBACCO

Sir,

Last year also we had made a written grievance to you when Justice O. P. Verma presented the "Red and White" bravery awards (Which has been instituted in the name of a cigarette "Red and White,") Though the letter remained un-replied by one of the most intelligent president of the country but still we expected and hoped that your office will take note of the issue and see that such things do not happen in future. But, another year, another Governor and yet again the promotion of a cigarette brand "Red and White" by the office of the Governor. Shameful, the word appears to be too mild to describe the act. The spirit of the constitution, the guidelines of the Government, the rulings of the supreme court and the law of the land going in for a toss. Things like courts, laws, regulations, orders, guidelines, etc. appears to be for the lesser mortal's only. This is how the things are growing; from bad to worse.

The Governors represent the President and the Government, such acts in violation of the law, their moral duties and spirit of the constitution presents the President and the Government in very poor light. We can not imagine the representative of His Excellency A.P.J. Abdul Kalam playing in the hands of tobacco companies and according it legal recognition.

This is certainly not the philosophy of a man who has an ignited mind and wings of fire. We know Mr. Abdul Kalam as a man who loves children and thinks about their future. Tobacco is the beast which kills the future. Then how can the representative of the President promote a brand name of a cigarette? It is very difficult to comprehend, indeed.

From May 1, 2004 when the law prohibiting any kind of promotion of tobacco product or its logo came into force, it became very clear that anyone participating or becoming a party to such promotion is a legal offender. Yesterday on January 17, 2005, when the Governor of Punjab, General Rodrigues participated in the 13th "Red and White" bravery awards function as the chief guest he not only infringed the law but also proved to be a man not worthy of being the first citizen of the state.

The world knows that "Red and White" is a brand of cigarette and the award function is just a deceitful way of promoting the brand of cigarette. Because of our last year protest and a large scale campaign, one of the logo of the cigarette brand was removed from the award promotion but still the other logo "Red & White" remains there. "Red and White" is a trade-name and trademark of Godfrey Phillips Limited, registered with respect to a cigarette brand, why is this simple fact overlooked and the tobacco company accommodated at all levels?

How can the Governor and the Government be ignorant of the fact? To remind you, the Indian government has also signed and ratified the Framework Convention on Tobacco

Control (FCTC) which specifically resolves to prohibit tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship under Article 13. Besides, section 5 of the “The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003” clearly says that “(3) No person, shall, under a contract or otherwise promote or agree to promote the use or consumption of— (a) cigarettes or any other tobacco product; or (b) any trade mark or brand name of cigarettes or any other tobacco product in exchange for a sponsorship, gift, prize or scholarship given or agreed to be given by another person. People ask; what good is the law, if the Government and the Governor himself has to disobey it?

We would also like to tell you about the mechanism of one of the sub-conscience processes of getting hooked to tobacco products so that you may appreciate this letter and the offence committed by the Governor a little better. The youngsters in the age group of 11 to 25 are easily impressed by any thing considered glamorous and fashionable, they easily relate to such acts, articles and substances. Tobacco is normally promoted to appeal to the emotions of the youngsters in this age group as over 85 percentage of new consumers are from this age group. Such awards and other such ceremonies and the presence of high dignitaries like the Governor gives an official recognition and public acceptance besides adding glamour to the name of the cigarette brand. This helps the cigarette company hook more youngsters to their brand of tobacco.

General Rodrigues has preferred to participate in the function of a tobacco company promoting their brand name through surrogate means against the interest of the general public, the innocent children, the constitution of India and the law of the land. Such patronage to a tobacco company by the Governor and his tacit support to a social ill is more than a sufficient reason to remove him from his office.

We request you to immediately recall General Rodrigues and relieve him of his charge as the Administrator of Chandigarh and the Governor of Punjab. If some other high officials and Governors can be removed for the reason that they had a certain pro-Hindu ideology, (which we do not know, they had or whether it was wrong or right) then the recent act of the Governor appears to be an unpardonable act as it amounts to participating in the world largest genocide under the patronage of tobacco companies. This mindset is definitely more wrong than the worst of any kind of political ideology. It is certainly more than a sufficient reason to remove him from his office.

Thanking you
Yours cordially



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