

P R E S S R E L E A S E

JPC Report a manifesto for environmental action in India, says CSE

- **Welcomes the Report wholeheartedly**
- **Says its recommendations will have far-reaching consequences for public health and food safety regulations in India**

New Delhi, February 5, 2004: Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), the New Delhi-based NGO whose August 2003 study exposed the presence of deadly pesticide residues in popular soft drink brands, has welcomed the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) that was released yesterday. In a press briefing here today, Sunita Narain, director, CSE, said: “

The JPC had been set up in following the CSE study to examine the issue of pesticide residues in and safety standards for soft drinks, fruit juices and other beverages.

CSE has always maintained that the issue of pesticides in soft drinks is about public health, food safety and the necessity of regulations in this sector. In its appeal to the JPC, CSE had argued for the implementation of stringent regulations and norms on this sector in the larger interest of public health.

CSE believes that the Committee has, through its report, made a far-reaching and very significant contribution to the cause of public health and food safety in India. In many ways, it has gone beyond its terms of reference to look at issues that have a bearing on the way India conducts its environmental business in future.

Besides welcoming the Committee’s vindication of its study, CSE has found merit in the Committee’s recommendations in all the areas that it has touched upon. The Committee has suggested that the water used in manufacturing soft drinks should be in conformity with the recently notified new water norms. CSE also welcomes the Committee’s recommendation on food standards which says that India should formulate its own food standards which are based on scientific criteria, protect the interest and health of its people, and are in keeping with internationally acceptable norms.

Further, the JPC has averred that stringent standards for carbonated beverages, which are best suited to Indian conditions, need to be fixed in the overall perspective of public health. The Committee has opined that it is “prudent to seek complete freedom from pesticide residues in sweetened aerated water”. It also says that standards notified under the draft notification for pesticide residues should not be made applicable to fruit juices and other beverages

The issue of caffeine content in soft drinks has also found a mention. The JPC suggests that soft drink companies should introduce non-caffeinated versions of their products in the Indian market. In line with global best practices on caffeine regulations, labeling of caffeinated beverages sold in India should be undertaken, opines the report.

The JPC has looked at length at the key issue of water as well. It has recommended that pricing and regulation of ground water, particularly for commercial purposes, be given serious attention by the ministry of water resources. Water, according to the JPC, should be included in the

definition of 'Food' in the PFA. The Committee also felt that a single organisation should be made responsible for implementation and monitoring of the quality of drinking water in the country

The JPC report has adopted a tough line with regard to the promotional blitzkrieg adopted by the Cola giants. It says that claims made by the Cola companies in their recent advertisements are tantamount to misleading the public, and that such misinformation campaigns should be checked.

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