

NGOs flay repeal of baby food Act Tribune News service

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Several NGOs and health organisations today condemned the move to repeal the Infant Milk Substitutes (IMS) Act, saying this would lead to aggressive marketing of formula milk and baby products by MNCs and jeopardise lives of millions of infants in the country.

A petition signed by several NGOs and health organisations in this regard would be sent to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, urging them to ensure that the Act is not repealed as scheduled with the enactment of the new Food Safety and Standards Bill 2005.

Dr Arun Gupta from the Breast-Feeding Promotion Network of India said the move would prove disastrous as the Act was the only legal vestige left that promoted breast-feeding by preventing the selling of formula milk as a superior product to breast milk

Dr Vandana Prasad of the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA) said if the infant food industry was brought under the trade-oriented food safety Bill, it would endanger lives of millions of infants.

Dr Mira Shiva of the Voluntary Health Association of India said marketing strategies made formula milk look like something more modern and healthier than breast milk, which even managed to attract poor uneducated women in villages.

However, using formula milk meant greater risk for infants as it required increased hygiene like boiling of milk bottles and good quality water.