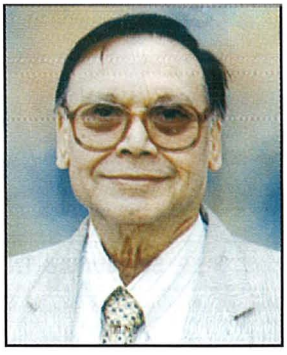
Editorial

Carry on Ramadoss



Minister of Health & Family Welfare Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss deserves BRAVO for continuing war against tobacco usage inspite of strong resistance from tobacco manufacturers lobby & their supporting political forces. In the past, a couple of Union Health Ministers tried to use their teeth to ban tobacco and pan masala but could not stand the political forces of tobacco lobbies both national and international.

Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss recently, while speaking at a regional workshop on illicit trade in tobacco products organised by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and World Health Organisation at Delhi, on September 16, 2008 pleaded for increase of over all taxes on tobacco products especially on Bidi. He said illicit trade in tobacco products undermine the efforts of Government to raise taxes and hampers the tobacco control measures by making cheaper products available. There is a need for uniform taxes in the region to reduce smuggling. he wants to impose hefty taxes on Bidi's to deter people from consuming it. Bidi's infact amount for 55% of tobacco use in India but since its production is a cottage industry based most of the sales are not taxed.

Dr. Ramadoss has no doubt touched the sore and sensitive nerve of the tobacco control problem, but most difficult to solve due to multifactorial reasons. The very genesis of Bidi production is deeply linked with not only tobacco usage but more strongly bonded with Bidi leaf, a by-product of forest, a heritage item of Adivasis rights of livelyhood. Bidi's are rolled manually involving labour engaging the family mostly the ladies and children at homes. The number of people involved in production of Bidi's is so high that they carry a huge vote power, controlled by the Bidi manufactureres. So much so that in certain states the Government toppled due to Bidi patta politics. What we are trying is extinguishing the fire from the top without eliminating it at the bottom, the cause. It is indeed a complex problem and demand a strong social and poltical will power.

Ramadoss also plans to take on the finance ministry by asking them to transfer the additional 5% on tobacco products to the health ministry for tobacco control activities such as awareness campaigns at District and School levels, offering alternative crops to the farmers setting up labs and offering alternative employment for tobacco farmers and Bidi workers.

It is indeed a wishful thinking with noble deed of Dr. Ramadoss. We at Dental profession strongly endorse the plans and efforts of Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss towards the tobacco control movement and say CARRY ON DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS. We are with you in the tobacco war.

Dr. V.P. Jalili