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Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

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Tmt. P. Geetha Jeevan
Hon. Minister of Social Welfare
Department of Social Welfare & Nutritious Meal Programme
Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai

May 21, 2021

Dear Madam,

Sub: Urgent need to ensure continuation of Midday Meal Scheme during COVID-19 pandemic

Greetings from CAG!

I am writing on behalf of Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), a 35-year-old non-profit, non-political, and professional organisation that works towards protecting citizens rights in consumer, civic and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability and participatory decision-making.

We applaud the efforts of the Tamil Nadu government in grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic which continues unabated since last year. While we understand the difficulties facing the government and appreciate the ongoing efforts, we would like to bring to your notice an important matter impacting children, the future of our state and nation.

As is well known, and rightly lauded, Tamil Nadu pioneered the concept of providing a nutritious noon meal in schools to provide essential nutrition to underprivileged children and to ensure they stayed in school and were able to obtain a valuable education. Tamil Nadu has been a role model in this effort and the scheme has seen rich dividends with school attendance rates improving dramatically.

However, there is a high probability that the current pandemic situation will result in children going for daily wage work and with families already in difficult financial circumstances, this income will be considered more important than education when schools reopen. Tamil Nadu will then see a sharp decline in school attendance negating the several years of good efforts by the government.

We, therefore, request you to ensure that food reaches these children daily. This must be undertaken on a war footing. We understand that in the current situation, schools cannot open and we cannot ask children to come to school. So therefore the government must devise ways to ensure food reaches these children daily without the process of distribution leading to crowding or creating congestion. Perhaps, volunteers or staff at the local level can be engaged in this.

We know you hold the welfare of children close to your heart and we look forward to your prompt action on this. Thanking you,


S. Saroja
Director

Trustees

Mr. Sriram Panchu (Senior Advocate)
Dr. R. Hema (Associate Professor)
Dr. Suchitra Ramkumar (Doctor and Teacher)

Dr. George Thomas (Orthopedic Surgeon)
Dr. C Rammanohar Reddy (Economist and Editor)
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