



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
INTERNATIONAL**  
INDIA

**JBF**  
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May 4, 2020

To

Dr Harsh Vardhan  
Hon'ble Cabinet Minister  
Minister for Health & Family Welfare  
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare  
348-A, Nirman Bhawan  
Maulana Azad Road  
New Delhi - 110011

Shri Jitendra Singh  
Minister of State (Independent Charge)  
Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region  
Vigyan Bhawan Annexe,  
Maulana Azad Road,  
New Delhi - 110011

Honorable Minister

We are writing to you on behalf of Humane Society International/India, People for Animals, JBF (India) Trust and Pawsome to request that you take urgent action to shut down the illegal dog meat trade and consumption in many parts of our country, including but not limited to Assam, Mizoram, Tripura and Nagaland. The Food Safety and Standards Authority Rules, 2011 already make it illegal to consume dogs. Recently, we welcomed the Mizoram assembly's decision to remove dogs from the Mizoram Animal Slaughter Act 2020. Despite this, there is continued consumption and illegal trade of street and pet dogs in India.

Recently, in China, one of the largest dog meat consumption countries in the world, the cities of Shenzhen and Zhuhai declared that dogs are exempt from the livestock white list (National Catalogue of Livestock and Poultry Genetic Resources) due to their special status as companion animals in China and around the world. These initiatives come at a time when countries across the globe are united in a collective response to the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, including revising food safety regulations. Within that context, it is imperative that authorities turn to trades such as the dog meat trade that, while not connected to COVID-19, pose their own significant human health risk, such as the spread of trichinellosis, cholera and rabies.

Rabies kills tens of thousands of people across Asia annually including more than 20,000 people in India alone, and has been found in dogs traded for human consumption in China, Vietnam and Indonesia. Not only is there a risk in handling the dogs, and in the extremely unsanitary slaughter and butchery process, but there is also some reason for concern surrounding consumption itself, with the World Health Organisation warning that eating dog meat increases the risk of contracting cholera. In addition to serious animal welfare issues posed by this exceptionally brutal trade, the mass movement of large numbers of dogs of unknown disease status across the borders of Assam and West

Bengal not only breaches the country's food safety regulations, but facilitates the spread of rabies and undermines India's efforts in controlling this disease,

including its commendable aspirations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver the objectives under the 'One Health strategy.

In addition, the trade in dogs for meat is largely fueled by criminal activity, as a large proportion of the animals are stolen pets.

With an estimated 30 million dogs killed for human consumption every year across Asia, including tens of thousands of dogs in India alone, and in light of the serious public health threat that this trade poses, and the responsibility of regional and national governments around the world to do everything in their power to mitigate sources of disease outbreaks, we urge you to take immediate action to shut down the illegal dog meat trade and slaughterhouses that exist in India. India is one of the few countries in Asia which has an explicit ban on dog meat consumption and trade, and therefore the strict implementation of this law would help demonstrate to the world that India prioritizes the health and safety of its citizens, as well as the protection of companion animals.

We request you to urgently issue directions from your office to the State Governments in this regard and look forward to your necessary action.

Yours sincerely



Alokparna Sengupta  
Managing Director  
Humane Society International/India



Dr Shashanka Dutta  
Founder & Managing Trustee  
JBF India Trust



Smt. Gauri Maulekhi  
Trustee  
People for Animals



Wrighbed Dutta  
General Secretary  
Pawsome, Tripura