

## Social Sector Hotline

February 13, 2017

### GOVERNMENT CLEARS THE AIR ON 'CONFLICT OF INTEREST': NO FINANCIAL LINKAGE BETWEEN GATES FOUNDATION AND NTAGI

The Central Government has clarified that the institutional collaboration between Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation ("BMGF") and National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization ("NTAGI") is not financially linked.

#### BACKGROUND

NTAGI is the highest advisory body on immunization in the country which consists of independent experts who provide recommendations on vaccines after reviewing data on disease burden, efficacy and cost-effectiveness of vaccines.

However, there were concerns raised from certain quarters about the institutional independence of NTAGI as its Secretariat was believed to be financially supported by BMGF-funded Immunization Technical Support Unit ("ITSU") at the Public Health Foundation of India ("PHFI").

#### GOVERNMENT'S PRESS NOTE DATED FEBRUARY 8, 2017

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare ("MoHFW") vide Press Note dated February 8, 2017 ("Press Note") has put to rest such speculations relating to 'conflict of interest' issue. The Government, through the Press Note, has clarified that there were no financial link of NTAGI with BMGF or any other organization as the body consisted of independent experts.

The Press Note clarified that in the last few years, many steps were taken to strengthen NTAGI by providing a Secretariat, establishing a code of practice and eventually institutionalizing it at the National Institute of Health & Family Welfare ("NIHFW"). The transitioning of the NTAGI Secretariat from ITSU to NIHFW was a planned activity and was part of the health system strengthening efforts by the Government.

The Press Note further clarified that transitioning of the NTAGI Secretariat from BMGF-funded ITSU to MoHFW would have no adverse impact on its functioning. Per the Press Note, technical support provided by ITSU to NTAGI shall continue till February 28, 2017 and the immunization project shall continue to support the immunization program in techno-managerial capacity beyond the above date. The Government, vide the Press Note, also clarified that it continues to collaborate with BMGF on National Health Mission.

#### ANALYSIS

BMGF's efforts in supporting public health programs in India has been widely acknowledged and appreciated. Such incidents of Government's disquiet will further discourage foreign foundations from engaging in philanthropic activities in India. Many foreign foundations, through their engagements in India, have helped Government implement public health projects more effectively, and they should be extended a welcome hand.

The transitioning of NTAGI Secretariat from ITSU, (which comes with the backdrop of a very public confrontation with Ford Foundation in India), it seems to suggest that the Government is still on a collision course with foreign foundations. On most occasions, it is observed that Government's reactions pertaining to 'conflict of interest' seem, most of the times, to be driven less by the force of reasoning, and more on prior assumptions.

Institutional collaborations by global foundations should not be seen by the government through the lens of political endorsements or hostilities.

Constant anxieties about credible foundations should not form part of bureaucratic narrative or administrative discourse of the Government. While call for greater accountability is always welcome, the Government should look into such issues 'dispassionately'- devoid of petulance and institutional crackdown.

There have already been significant commitments and contributions by major international foundations in India, any unwanted Government interference will only increase the trust deficit between them. Instead, the Government should encourage more institutional collaborations with international aid agencies and foundations, as they lend more credibility to public health projects and also impart fiscal discipline in the manner money is spent on such projects by state agencies.

– Rahul Rishi & Pratibha Jain

You can direct your queries or comments to the authors

#### DISCLAIMER

The contents of this hotline should not be construed as legal opinion. View detailed disclaimer.

## Research Papers

### New Age of Franchising

June 20, 2025

### Life Sciences 2025

June 11, 2025

### The Tour d'Horizon of Data Law Implications of Digital Twins

May 29, 2025

## Research Articles

### 2025 Watchlist: Life Sciences Sector India

April 04, 2025

### Re-Evaluating Press Note 3 Of 2020: Should India's Land Borders Still Define Foreign Investment Boundaries?

February 04, 2025

### INDIA 2025: The Emerging Powerhouse for Private Equity and M&A Deals

January 15, 2025

## Audio

### CCI's Deal Value Test

February 22, 2025

### Securities Market Regulator's Continued Quest Against "Unfiltered" Financial Advice

December 18, 2024

### Digital Lending - Part 1 - What's New with NBFC P2Ps

November 19, 2024

## NDA Connect

Connect with us at events, conferences and seminars.

## NDA Hotline

Click here to view Hotline archives.

## Video

Yyapak Desai speaking on the danger of deepfakes | Legally Speaking with Tarun Nangia | NewsX

April 01, 2025

This Hotline provides general information existing at the time of preparation. The Hotline is intended as a news update and Nishith Desai Associates neither assumes nor accepts any responsibility for any loss arising to any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of any material contained in this Hotline. It is recommended that professional advice be taken based on the specific facts and circumstances. This Hotline does not substitute the need to refer to the original pronouncements.

This is not a Spam mail. You have received this mail because you have either requested for it or someone must have suggested your name. Since India has no anti-spamming law, we refer to the US directive, which states that a mail cannot be considered Spam if it contains the sender's contact information, which this mail does. In case this mail doesn't concern you, please unsubscribe from mailing list.

**Vaibhav Parikh, Partner, Nishith Desai Associate on Tech, M&A, and Ease of Doing Business**

March 19, 2025

**SIAC 2025 Rules: Key changes & Implications**

February 18, 2025