

NGO says it with pictures

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BANGALORE: Aiming to make pictorial health warning labels more effective in communicating the risk and adverse health effects of tobacco use to the public, the Institute of Public Health (IPH), a city-based NGO working on public health issues, in co-ordination with the Advocacy Forum for Tobacco Control (AFTC), is now resorting to political advocacy in order to make the measure more stronger.

IPH is distributing an information package in Kannada to all the MLAs and MPs of the state. The package comprises of cards with pertinent information regarding burden caused by tobacco in India, international obligations and global best practices and also scientific data that pictorial health warnings have proved to be in the interest of public health, in countries wherever they have been implemented.

Stressing on the importance of pictorial warnings, Munegowda, faculty, IPH, said, “Compared to text messages, pictorial warnings can be recognised even by low-literacy audiences and children — two vulnerable population groups in the society. Such pictorial warnings can communicate health messages effectively and motivate tobacco users to quit”.

“The present set of notified warnings are mild, diluted, and occupies only 40 per cent of the front panel and moreover, they are not field tested. India requires stronger and field-tested warnings to reduce tobacco-related deaths and diseases” he adds.

Speaking to Express about their intention in posting the information package first to the political leaders, he opined, “MPs and MLAs are the Constitution-makers. So during the next session, they can take up the idea, discuss and implement it accordingly.” “Apart from this we are also planning to post the information package to all the media houses soon,” Munegowda added. Besides, a concerted campaign is being organised in 12 states and at the Central level to advocate this issue.

AFTC has been instrumental in undertaking collaborative advocacy campaign with Parliamentarians for effective implementation of pictorial health warnings on all tobacco products.