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A NEW pictorial warning depicting mouth cancer will now be displayed on tobacco products.

The Union Health Ministry issued a notification on Tuesday, giving two months to tobacco manufacturers for replacing the earlier photo of an X-ray image on cigarette packs and of a scorpion on smokeless tobacco products with that of a picture on mouth cancer.

According to the Ministry, the process to change the pictures started earlier this year after it was found that the pictorial warnings were not making the desired impact. Hard-hitting images like a bent cigarette showing impotence, heart attack, mouth cancer — were then short listed and put out for a field test.

Two organisations — Voluntary Health Organisation of India (VHAI) and Mumbai-based Healis — con-

ducted a field test in various states including UP, Bihar, Orissa and Maharashtra. The field tests found the picture depicting mouth cancer to be most effective.

"On the basis of reports by the two organisations, the Health Minister approved of this (mouth cancer) picture," said a senior official in the Ministry.

With the Ministry notifying the new warning, it will now be mandatory for tobacco manufacturers to put it up by June 1. The picture of a mouth cancer is already in use in Australia. While the earlier message — smoking kills/tobacco kills — will remain as it is, the message, 'tobacco causes mouth cancer', will be used along with the picture.

The pictorial warnings' were introduced in 2008 after much wrangling. Under court orders in February 2007, the government kept postponing it primarily under pressure from the tobacco industry.