

Govt is not serious about tobacco ban, say doctors

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Unhappy with warning labels on tobacco products and lack of seriousness in tobacco bans, experts in the field of tobacco control across the country met to discuss strategies to push the government into implementing the laws seriously.

The three-day meeting organised by the Advocacy Forum for Tobacco Control (AFTC), a coalition of more than 60 tobacco control organisations in India, at a Madh Island hotel concluded last week.

"We will soon write to the health ministry about the issues," said Dr Praksha Gupta, director, Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health, which is a member of AFTC.

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According to Gupta, there are several rules meant for tobacco control which are being violated openly. "We see a lot of indirect advertising of tobacco brands and absolutely no action can be initiated against them. Tobacco products are openly advertised as non-tobacco ones," said Gupta, adding that all these points will be compiled and highlighted in front of the ministry.

Head of preventive oncology, Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH), Dr S Shastri, said, "We are particularly unhappy with the warning labels on tobacco products. They are so small and are totally ineffective."

TMH has sent photographs to the health ministry which could be used on cigarette packets and other tobacco products. The forum is also planning to highlight the issue of major advertising of tobacco companies during the Gan-pati festival.