

Anti-tobacco groups welcome notification on pictorial warnings

Press Trust of India

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Anti-tobacco advocacy groups, pressing for speedy implementation of pictorial health warnings on tobacco products, have welcomed the Government notification in this regard, which will come in force from November 30.

After numerous notifications and revision of implementation dates for the last one year, on August 28, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, finally notified the date of implementation as November 30.

Implementation of pictorial health warnings on tobacco products in the country had been repeatedly delayed and diluted since July 2006, owing to political pressures and lobbying by the tobacco industry.

"Pictorial health warning labels effectively communicate the risks of tobacco use. Extensive research from across the globe has established that effective health

warnings, an increase in knowledge about risks associated with tobacco use and can decrease intentions to use tobacco among vulnerable youth and persuade tobacco users to quit," Dr P. Gupta, Director, Healis Sekhsaria Institute of Public Health (HSIPH), an NGO based in Mumbai, said.

GREATER IMPACT

"Graphic warnings have a greater impact than text-only ones and can be recognised by low-literacy audience and children - vulnerable population groups," he said.

Besides, on behalf of 50 pan-India organisations working for tobacco control in India, the Advocacy Forum for Tobacco Control (AFTC) has released an information package to members of both Houses of Parliament, members and leading national newspapers.

This package comprises of cards, revealing scientific da-

ta, that pictorial health warnings have proved to be in interest of public health, in the countries wherever they have been implemented.

The facts presented in the cards are corroborated by evidence-based research demonstrating that there is a strong public support for implementation of pictorial health warnings on tobacco products.

A study conducted by HSIPH, among 712 Mumbai-based individuals, above the age of 15 years, concluded that 97 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that pictorial health warnings should be displayed on cigarette packs and 85 per cent respondents felt that strong health warnings on cigarettes should be displayed immediately.

"The message from public is loud and clear, public wants clear health warnings without delay on tobacco products," Mr Gupta said.