

# Daily Times

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## Pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs delayed

### Staff Report

**ISLAMABAD:** The Health Ministry has delayed introduction of pictorial health warnings on cigarette packets by the tobacco industry till May, it's learnt.

On May 31 last year, the ministry had directed the industry to print pictorial health warnings on cigarette packets from January 1, 2010 to highlight the tobacco related health hazards.

The ministry has however delayed implementation of the decision till May, sources told Daily Times on Tuesday.

Sources claimed the cash-rich tobacco industry had influenced the ministry for the delay.

They said soon after the

Health Ministry's decision on May 31 last year, the cigarette manufacturers held a number of meetings with senior Health Ministry officials in an attempt to reverse or delay introduction of the pictorial warnings on cigarette packets.

Sources said the Health Ministry had begun work on legislation on the pictorial warnings in consultation with the Law Ministry but that hit snags.

They said the industry expressed its inability to print the said warnings on cigarette packets within six months while claiming Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Romania and India took more than two years for the same.

Meanwhile, Executive Director of TheNetwork for

Consumer Protection Dr Arif Azad has expressed concern over the Health Ministry's delay in implementation of its May 31 decision.

He said in a statement that instead of complying with international commitments, the ministry was coming up with excuses for delaying printing of pictorial warnings on cigarette packets.

He said the picture-based health warnings were significant for countries like Pakistan where literacy rate was low, resources for public health education were scarce, and majority of population couldn't read warnings against tobacco use.

Azad said by introducing pictorial warnings, Pakistan would join more than 30 countries having similar warnings.