

Daily Times

February 2, 2010

Govt misses deadline to implement pictorial tobacco warnings

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD: The country's healthcare authorities have once again failed to implement the decision regarding enforcing pictorial warnings on cigarette packs from February 1.

The decision to print a pictorial health warning was announced by the Health Ministry on May 31, 2009.

Initially, January 1, 2010 had been set as the deadline to implement the decision, which was later extended to February 1.

The Network, a leading anti-smoking civil society

organisation, criticised the government's failure to enforce the ministry's decision, which has again extended the implementation until the end of May.

It said the government had been constantly violating its own decisions to implement the pictorial warnings, suspecting the government was secretly safeguarding the interests of the tobacco industry.

The Network Executive Director Dr Arif Azad said almost 273 people die of tobacco-related diseases in Pakistan every day.

He said, Pakistan, along

with another 168 countries, was bound by the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to enforce pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs.

The treaty was drafted under the aegis of World Health Organisation and adopted by world health assembly in 2003, with Pakistan ratifying it on November 3, 2004.

One of the major provisions of the FCTC was to print pictorial warnings on cigarette packs to help illiterate people understand the hazardous implications of tobacco.