

BUSINESS RECORDER

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NATIONAL NEWS

Prohibition of smoking

Govt fails to implement advertising guidelines

RECORDER REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Government has failed to implement the advertising guidelines of Prohibition of Smoking & Protection of Non-Smokers' Health Ordinance and nothing is being done to ask the tobacco industry to strictly follow the relevant laws and regulations.

The Health Ministry was unable to go for the complete enforcement of the advertising guidelines of the relevant law because of inadequate implementation mechanism adopted by them, Waqar Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer, TheNetwork for Consumer Protection said here on Monday.

In spite of banning tobacco advertisements on electronic and print media, the government should take exception to the other forms of advertisements adopted by this industry including posters, billboards, sponsorships and offering attractive gift schemes, Waqar Ahmed said.

He said that how could the health managers persuade the tobacco industry for complete implementation of tobacco adver-

tising guidelines when senior health officials seek assistance from tobacco industry in emergency and relief work of government. Officials in ministry of health demonstrated this unethical practice especially in case of rehabilitation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Ministry of Health seems to be influenced by the tobacco industry as no further steps have been taken since the health minister made the landmark decision that the pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs will be implemented in letter and in spirit, TheNetwork chief said.

He said that the ministry has not yet issued the orders for implementation of SRO which indicates that ministry is on the path of retraction from the earlier decision under the immense pressure by tobacco industry. However, no measures are being carried out by the health managers to dispel this impression and as a result goes on the open violation of advertisement guidelines of Prohibition of Smoking & Protection of Non-Smokers' Health Ordinance, 2002 everywhere in the twin cities, he

added. It is pertinent to mention that apart from the lenient attitude of health managers towards the tobacco industry the business interests and the vigorous promotional campaigns of tobacco industry are also proving the stumbling blocks in the way of effective implementation of the tobacco law. It is observed that large size posters of big cigarette brand are pasted on walls, book shops and general stores within the range of 50 meters of many educational institutes of twin cities, which is open violation of the law as the law clearly prohibits advertisements of tobacco products within 50 meters of any educational body. These posters carrying attractive offers of gifts for smokers were meant to lure the youth studying in different educational institute.

TheNetwork is pursuing this serious issue with the ministry as TheNetwork is a member of two committees established by Ministry of Health, Committee of tobacco advertising guidelines and the other is monitoring force for the implementation of tobacco control law.