

Wednesday, June 1, 2005

# Hindustan Times

LAST SMOKE

## Sunset for smoking, swaggering heroes

**SANCHITA Sharma**  
New Delhi, May 31

IF YOU catch a movie at a cinema or on TV after August 1, don't be surprised if Amitabh Bachchan's famous bidi scene in *Deewar* is blacked out or Devdas' signature pipe is pixilised.

Under renewed government efforts to de-glamourise the use of tobacco, scenes in films or serials that show characters chewing or smoking tobacco will be blacked out from Indian

screens. The government has introduced stringent amendments to the tobacco-control rules in this regard.

"Following the ban on tobacco advertising last year, we found that product placement in films and TV serials had increased, as had the number of actors using tobacco products," Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss said on Tuesday.

According to the amendments that were notified on Tuesday, scenes of actors con-



**REEL DRAG:** (From extreme left) Vivek Oberoi, Amitabh Bachchan and Shahrukh Khan smoking on screen

suming tobacco in any form in movies or serials aired via electronic media will have to either be edited out or pixilised. In situations where this cannot be done, a prominent scroll containing health warnings will

have to be screened with the 'smoking situation.' The brand name or logo of the product will also have to be cropped or masked in these films/serials.

These rules will not only apply to new releases but also to

old films that are aired on TV.

"Several studies have shown that advertising bans and de-glamourising tobacco use discourages the young from taking to the addiction, which kills a person every 6.5 seconds in the world," says S. J. Habayeb, WHO India representative.

According to an almost decade-old ICMR statistic, about 8 lakh people die of tobacco-related diseases in India every year, but experts say the figure is much higher.

## From August, no smoking on screen

By Chandrika Mago & Nikita Doval  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Come August 1, cigarettes will be banished from movies and television. And if there is screening of movies predating the ban — say, Humphrey Bogart lighting up in *Casablanca* or Amitabh Bachchan chewing on his bidi in *Deewar* — it will come with a mandatory warning across the screen saying smoking is hazardous to your health.

In what seems to be a case of hyper activism, government on Tuesday — World No-Tobacco Day — came out with a notification banning use of tobacco products from big and small screen, but posing, at the same time, a whole new creative challenge for movie-makers and fans.

Imagine Rajnikant without his trademark cigarette tricks.



**"An absurd regulation. One would understand ban on surrogate advertising but to completely ban smoking is ridiculous, a joke taken too far"**

MAHESH BHATT



**"I don't think this ban will impinge on the creativity of filmmakers. Rules have to be followed but one can work a way out if required"**

SHARMILA TAGORE



**"The smoking act comes in handy when you want to develop a character. It could be a style statement. The ban does not make any sense"**

SHYAM BENEGAL

Imagine the sudden eruption of a warning scroll on the screen when you are watching Sanjeev Kumar and Saeed Mirza pulling on their hookah while playing chess in Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khiladi*. Or imagine Dasrath Singh (Amitabh Bachchan) without his bidi in *Bunty Aur Babli*.

But the order is clear: From August, no display of tobacco prod-

ucts or their use by characters in movies and TV. For older movies, they will have to carry "prominent" scrolls containing health warnings. States have been told by the Centre to enforce the order.

Not surprisingly, a number of directors and actors are outraged at what they consider a vandalism of cinema, although a few also felt they could live with the ban.

Said Shyam Benegal: "This ban does not make any sense. It is not a well-advised step. The act of smoking on celluloid comes in handy when you want to develop a character — it could be a style statement or an act of nervousness. Government should, instead, go after the source — the guys who produce tobacco and make tonnes of money."

Mahesh Bhatt termed it "an absurd regulation". "One would understand if surrogate advertising was banned or government tried to sensitise film-makers and actors, but to ban smoking on screen is ridiculous, it's a joke taken too far. And how can one insert a warning right in the middle of a scene? It'll jar the senses," he said.

Top actor and former censor board chief Anupam Kher said: "If it's really concerned about tobacco, why doesn't government stop children from working in tobacco factories? If a character is smoking on screen, it's fiction — it can be used to show a character's trait or it can help build an identity. Tomorrow, they can turn around and say don't show guns in movies as it will encourage violence."

► 'Rule won't curb any creativity': P13

# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

## Govt bans tobacco products in movies, TV

Our Delhi Bureau  
31 MAY

**T**HE government today announced a ban on screening of tobacco products in movies or tele-serials from August 1. A high-level committee has already been constituted to study surrogate advertising.

"Government has notified additional rules that ban screening of tobacco products by characters in movies or television. The notification comes into effect from August 1, 2005," joint secretary, health and family welfare, Bhawani Tyagarajan said today.

The six provisions, introduced in the existing laws, require mandatory display or prominent scroll containing health warning when use of tobacco products is shown in all the movies or TV serials irrespective of the timeframe they were shot. Under the new law, at least 50% area on tobacco packages should be used for pictorial depiction of specified warnings, Tyagarajan said adding "only one board of advertisement will be displayed at the point of sale of tobacco products which will avoid display of promotional message and picture and the board will not be illuminated."

The new law explicitly defines indirect advertising that includes ban on promotion of non-tobacco products bearing the same brand name of tobacco products, she added.

India is one of the few countries which has ratified the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and is working to-

wards formulating a 'National Tobacco Control Programme', she said.

The high-level committee, involving MPs, officials from the information and broadcasting and health ministries and ICMR, would deal with surrogate advertising of tobacco product, union health minister Anbumani Ramadoss said.

The committee would examine the issue on a case-to-case basis. The issue of awards being constituted in the name of some cigarette brands would also be examined, he said. Under the new law all, at least 50% area on tobacco packages should be used for pictorial depiction of specified warnings, Tyagarajan said adding "only one board of advertisement will be displayed at the point of sale of tobacco products which will avoid display of promotional message and picture and the board will not be illuminated."

The new law explicitly defines indirect advertising that includes ban on promotion of non-tobacco products bearing the same brand name of tobacco products, she added.

The ministry is also taking steps for the establishment of tobacco testing labs that are essential for implementing the provision, she said.

## Broadcasters plan self regulation

Gurbir Singh  
MUMBAI 31 MAY

**T**HE APRIL 12 ban order served on all television channels not to air surrogate advertisements or brand extensions of liquor and tobacco products has had a serious impact on revenues of TV channels. To remedy the situation, Indian Broadcasting Federation (IBF), the apex body of broadcasters, has decided to introduce stringent self-regulatory measures.

While it is difficult to quantify the loss of ad revenue on account of the new fiat, big advertisers like the UB Group and ITC have put much of their brand extension advertising with brands like 'Kingfisher' and 'Wills Lifestyle' on hold. Surrogate and brand extension advertising is said to account for at least 10-15% of TV channels' ad revenue. As a self-regulatory measure to meet the April 12 ban, the IBF has decided to set up a joint team with the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) to screen and weed out advertisements which violate the advertising code. The IBF had earlier developed a procedure to identify any advertising that may vitiate the programme and advertising code set out under the Cable Networks Act. However, at its board meeting held on Monday, the IBF decided to form an independent body with advertisers to work as a 'filter' so as to reduce violations to the minimum.

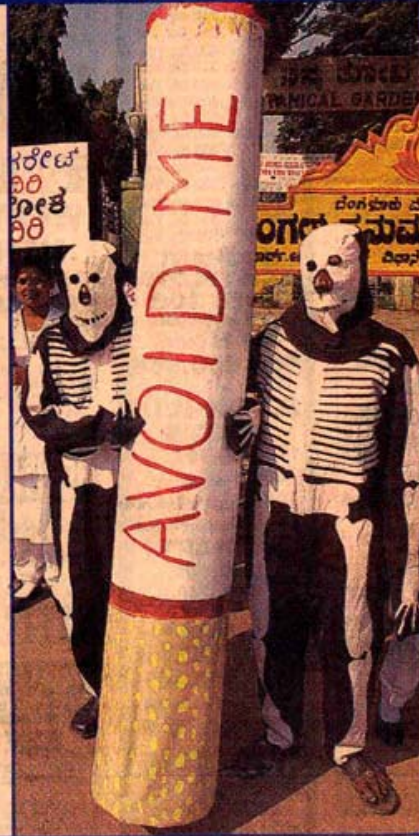
Broadcasters are obviously not taking any chances this time, as the April 12 notification from the I&B ministry has an ominous ring about it. Drawing attention to Cable Network Rules 7(2)(viii), 1995 that prohibit the advertisement of liquor and tobacco products, the circular directs TV channels "to strictly adhere not to telecast any advertisement for a product that has a brand name which is also used for cigarettes, tobacco products, wine, alcohol, liquor and other products.

## Big & small, tobacco off screen from Aug 1



THE government on Tuesday announced a ban on screening of tobacco products in movies or TV serials from August 1. A high-level committee has also been constituted to handle surrogate advertising. The six provisions, introduced in

the existing laws, require mandatory display or prominent scroll containing health warning when use of tobacco products is shown in all the movies or TV serials irrespective of the timeframe they were shot. Under the new law, at least 50% area on tobacco packages should be used for pictorial depiction of specified warnings. The new law includes a ban on promotion of non-tobacco products bearing the same brand name of tobacco products. P 9



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## Govt's Doctor plays The Cigarette Censor

**RAMADOSS** | India becomes first country to ban smoking/cigarettes on screen; says foreign movies need blurring

**TOUFIQ RASHID**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

**T**HE next time you see smoke on celluloid, it won't be coming from a cigarette or a *chillum* — no dum maro songs anymore. In a bizarre order, the Union Health Ministry has issued directives banning all smoking scenes in films as well as on television. The government has also banned showing cigarette packs, hoardings or even using any item with a cigarette brand name on it in films.

With these stringent rules, India becomes the first country to ban smoking on screen. Films that have already been shot and include shots of people smoking, will need to a

run a scroll at the bottom of the screen, warning of the hazards of smoking.

"We are giving them two months but no such scenes will be allowed after that," said Bhavani Thayarajan, joint secretary, Ministry of Health, announcing the new measures.

The law also applies to foreign films or old films being re-released or shown on television. Distributors and television channels will be required to blur the screen each time an actor lights up or a cigarette brand makes a guest appearance.



Next time on the screen, you will see a blur

The horizontal warning scroll also becomes mandatory.

Ministry officials said they took these steps after a recent WHO study "held Bollywood responsible for glamourising smoking". "Film actors have a lasting impact on the minds of children and young adults," pointed out Dr Anbumani Ramadoss, Union health minister. "There are reports that more women and children are smoking these days," he added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

India signatory to WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, ratified on Feb 27, '05

Said Srinath Reddy, WHO consultant on anti-smoking:

■ India is first country to ban smoking on cinema screen

■ Takes lead in banning sale of cigarettes to minors

■ South Africa, Thailand are the only other developing countries with anti-smoking laws

■ US opposed to a ban on smoking in films on the grounds of freedom of expression

■ Japan wants to retain cigarette sale through vending machines



## Govt Doctor plays the Cigarette Censor



To be effective from August 1, 2005, the order has been notified on

the occasion of World No-Tobacco Day today. It is part of a Health Ministry initiative to give more teeth to anti-smoking laws. For instance, smoking is officially banned in public places in the capital, but that doesn't stop hard smokers puffing away with impunity.

Today's order also cracks down on "surrogate advertising" — defined as all kind of indirect references to a tobacco brand name. "Nobody can constitute awards in the name of cigarette brands, even the cigarette brands appearing on Formula 1 cars will have to be removed," said Thyagaragan.

How sportscasters showing F-1 races will tackle this is unclear. The status of promotional events such as the Red and White Bravery Awards also comes under a cloud. A high-level screening committee has been set up to look into established brand extensions — such as Wills clothing.

Following violations in terms of cigarette advertising at the point of sale, the government has banned illumination of advertising boards as well as reduced the size of the boards. "The shopkeepers can just name the particular brands. No pictorial depiction will be allowed," announced the ministry.

In order to make cigarettes inaccessible to minors, the government has even prohibited the sale of cigarettes through vending machines. "In a few months," said Dr Ramadoss, "there will be pictorial warning regarding the harmful effects on the cigarette packs."

## 'Smoking rule won't curb any creativity'

By Chandrika Mago &  
Nikita Doval/TNN

**New Delhi:** Censor board chief Sharmila Tagore says the decision to ban cigarettes from movies and TV will not curb creativity. "I don't think it will impinge on the creativity of film-makers. I don't think smoking is necessary to show a character either as good or bad. If there is a situation where a character is required to smoke, then, after the film-maker puts in his views, we can work around the guidelines. We'll cross the bridge when we come to it."

Interestingly, director Sanjay Gupta, who has made gangster films like *Kaante* and *Musafir* echoed Tagore's views, while saying the new rule wouldn't curb creativity. "Before the start of *Musafir*, I had flashed such a message, and in this case too, one is free to show characters doing what one wants them to do, as long as there's an accompanying warning."

Coming back to the order, not only cinema, even Michael Schumacher sporting a Marlboro T-shirt could come slashed, the brand

name or logo of any tobacco product cropped or masked if it's printed or aired through any form of electronic media. This example comes straight from a government official.

Announcing the new measures, health minister Anbumani Ramadoss spoke with evangelical zeal, brushing aside arguments of a blow to the Rs 35,000-crore tobacco industry. An equal amount was being spent on treating people suffering from diseases arising out of tobacco use, he said.



Bogart lights up

He, in fact, invoked the World Health Organisation's studies to prove the point. It was documenting the effects of films on children, he said, claiming that teenagers in Tamil Nadu were smoking because they saw their movie idols smoking.

Once these changes come into effect, you will also get tobacco products through vending machines. This is to stop it getting into the hands of children. Under the new regime, the tobacco industry cannot use kids to sell its products. If it does, it will be punished.