



# Rahul Dravid bats for plugging loopholes in tobacco control laws

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New Delhi: Former cricketer Rahul Dravid, who is India's ambassador for the tobacco control campaign, has written to Health Minister [J P Nadda](#) urging him to implement the new pictorial warnings from April 1 and ensure that existing loopholes in the legal framework that are exploited by tobacco industry are plugged.

"I am happy to note that the Health Ministry is taking strong measures to protect the citizens of India, particularly youth, from the lethal tobacco addictions," Dravid said in his letter to Nadda today.

"Particularly, I would like to congratulate the Health Ministry for mandating 85 per cent pictorial health warnings for tobacco product packages to be enforced from April 1, 2015. I understand that the Ministry is also in the process of strengthening the overall Indian tobacco control law.

"I urge the Ministry to ensure that all provisions are adequately reinforced to plug any existing loopholes in the overall Indian tobacco control law that are exploited by tobacco industry," the former Indian cricket team captain said.

The Ministry on October 15 last year had issued a notification directing tobacco manufacturing companies to devote at least 85 per cent of the surface areas of all tobacco products on both sides to graphically and literally represent the statutory warning.

The move had made India a top ranker in terms of display of caution on packages.

Meanwhile, 27-year-old Sunita Tomar, an oral cancer patient from Madhya Pradesh who underwent surgery at the Tata Memorial Hospital, is face of the public awareness

campaign 'Lives Bachao, Size Badhao' (Save Lives, Increase the Size) to support the move for larger graphic health warning on tobacco products sold across India.

The prime objective of this campaign is to garner support through a petition that will be presented to the government in March, signatures for which will be collected both online and on ground. The petition, which has been addressed to Nadda on behalf of Tomar is currently available online at <http://chn.Ge/1Dy6QQu>.

Also, members of the Voluntary Health Association, an organisation fighting against consumption of tobacco, are sending emails to individuals or connecting with people through Twitter and Facebook, urging them to join the campaign.

"We are trying to involve as many people as we can in the campaign. If a huge section of society raises its voice in support of using bigger pictorial warnings, the Government of India will implement the new pictorial health warnings from April 1," said Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Executive Director of the Association.

More than 500 representations and over 4,000 signed letters from women groups, youth associations, doctors, hospitals, self-help groups, heads of educational institutions, voluntary organisations and government employees have already been sent to the Prime Minister and the Health Minister, strongly advocating and supporting for the stronger and new pictorial warnings to be implemented on all tobacco packs from April 1.

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