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## Tobacco farmers rally against pictorial warning

December 09, 2015 12:00 am | Updated March 24, 2016 02:39 pm IST - NEW DELHI:

VIKAS VASUDEVA

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Tobacco farmers from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Gujarat and Rajasthan staged a protest here on Tuesday, demanding the withdrawal of the proposed notification requiring health warnings across 85 per cent of the surface of cigarette packs, up from 40 per cent of the pack front.

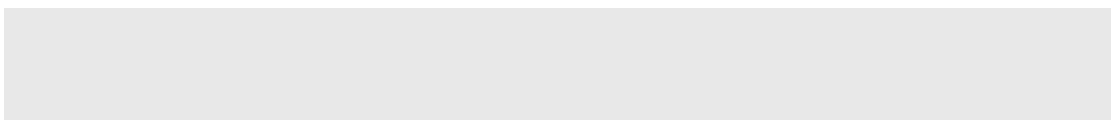
Members of the Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), a body of farmers growing cash crops, staged the protest outside the residences of Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Jagat Prakash Nadda and Dilip Gandhi, head of the parliamentary panel on subordinate legislation, which examines the provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003. They also submitted a memorandum.

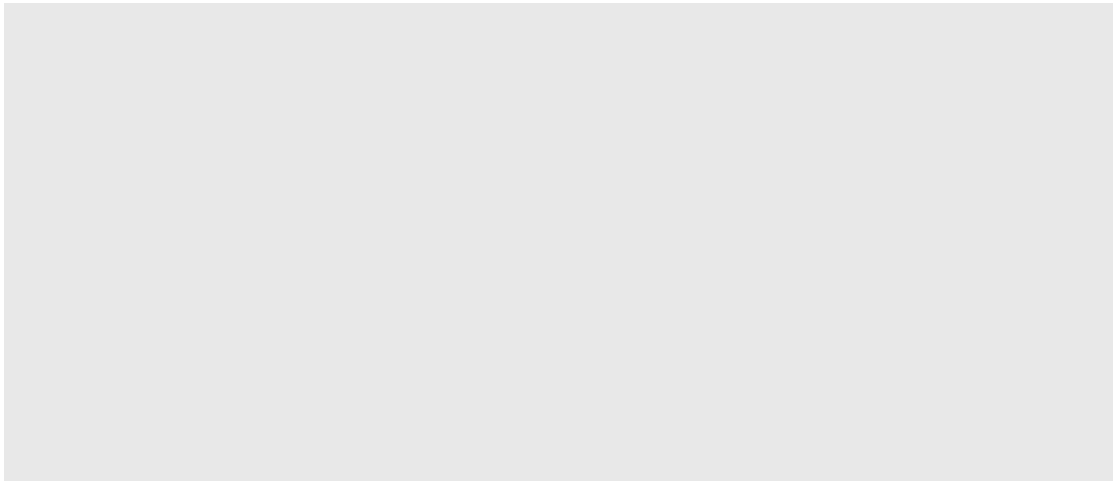
FAIFA president B.V. Javare Gowda said the government should reconsider the proposal, which was pushed by NGOs with vested interests. "The pictorial warnings harm the interests of domestic farmers, as consumers prefer smuggled foreign cigarettes which do not have such warnings."

### Spate of suicides


Tobacco is an important cash crop for Indian farmers as it is immune to climate variations and can grow in water-deficit regions. However, with domestic tobacco sales impacted by illegal tobacco imports, there has been a spate of suicides of late among tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka, something that happens for the first time, the farmer leaders said.

FAIFA general secretary Murali Babu argued that despite the tobacco-control measures all these years, consumption had not gone down in India though farmers' livelihood was destroyed with the gains going to foreign tobacco producers. "We urge the government to ensure that no foreign, illicit or illegal tobacco is sold in India, so that there is no need for a production cut."





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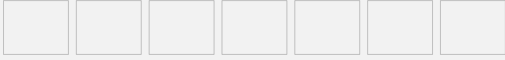
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