

Labour min urges beedi alert rethink

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Labour min urges beedi alert rethink (Getty Images)

The labour ministry has urged the health ministry to reconsider the mandated pictorial warning covering 85% of the packaging space on beedi packets as several trade unions, including RSS-backed Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), have demanded a rethink on the decision in the interest of 1.5 crore beedi workers. Labour minister Bandaru Dattatreya also held tripartite consultations on the notification issued on October 15, 2010 and its impact on the workers and industry.

From April 1, 2016, the health ministry's notification came into force for implementation of the Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labeling) Amendment Rules, 2014.

In a letter to health minister J P Nadda, Dattatreya asked him to reconsider the decision, arguing that the notification has invited "severe criticism" from stakeholders in spite of the government's noble intentions.

He raised concerns over impending loss of livelihood opportunities to beedi workers, who mostly comprise home-based and piece-rate workers who earn their living solely from beedi rolling or packaging.

"It is my understanding that the poor and illiterate beedi workers of our country are not ready at the moment to migrate to an alternative occupation, which will ensure a decent livelihood," he wrote in the letter.

BMS has also asked the government to reconsider its decision on the notification.