



## Health Ministry denies compromise on OTT smoking rules

*The Hindu had reported that the government had relaxed rules regarding anti-tobacco warnings on streaming platforms*

**Aroon Deep | October 22, 2023**

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Saturday denied The Hindu's report on weak enforcement of anti-tobacco warnings for TV shows and films streamed online.

"A reputed news publication has recently made a claim that the Union Government has reached 'an uneasy compromise' with OTT (over-the-top) streaming services on adding smoking warnings to their content," the Ministry said in a statement. "The report further claims that some platforms have chosen less intrusive warnings as a result of such an agreement. The news report is misinformed and [its] claims are false, misleading and based on misrepresented facts."



*Representative image*

The report was based on interviews with an industry participant at a recent meeting between the government and streaming firms, official minutes of the meeting provided to The Hindu by the Health Ministry, and a review of content across streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, including series and films that were released after September 1, when the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Amendment Rules, 2023, came into force.

The Rules require streaming platforms to have two video warnings against tobacco consumption for each film or TV episode that features smoking scenes, and an onscreen textual warning on each shot where tobacco consumption is depicted. While the Rules have been in force for over six weeks, streaming platforms have not enforced it in letter and spirit, The Hindu had found.

On August 28, industry and government representatives met, and the Secretary for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting "emphasised the need to have a more pragmatic approach, rather than applying the provisions applicable to films and TV on OTT platforms which are a different form of media", as a concluding note to the meeting, according to the minutes provided to The Hindu by the government.

The Health Ministry now says that it will not dilute the Rules, whose requirements have not been put on hold officially. "There is no compromise with the rules and action will be initiated by the government for any non-compliance with the OTT Rules 2023," the Health Ministry said.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/health-ministry-denies-compromise-on-ott-smoking-rules/article67447285.ece>