



To,

fbgoindia@support.facebook.com

Date-29-05-2025

Dear Sir/ Mam

Subject: Complaint Against Illegal Reels and Videos on Facebook Promoting Marlboro Cigarettes

We (Shram) are a self-help group with large number of doctors and professionals, working in the field of health and education since many years unstintingly building awareness campaigns against tobacco and alcohol. Objectives of Shram dictate us that we assist the Government in arriving at judicious decisions on all policy matters relating to the health of citizens. It is under this capacity we are writing this letter to you. We are writing to complain to you about the increasing number of videos/reels promoting cigarette brands like Marlboro Advance cigarettes, Compact, etc which we are seeing on your platform.

Please note that the Government of India has taken all steps to pass laws prohibiting cigarette advertisements, through press, through television, radio and any other medium, including electronic/digital mediums like social media platforms. The law is very clear – no person shall directly or indirectly promote or advertise cigarettes and no person having control over any medium shall permit such advertisement/promotion of cigarettes to be made. Yet, we see brand owners Phillip Morris and its Indian associate, Godfrey Phillips who are the real beneficiaries of advertising Marlboro Advance cigarettes through an ever- increasing number of videos and reels on your platform using surreptitiously. A list of the some of the reels are enclosed with this letter.

These reels squarely fall foul of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement And Regulation Of Trade And Commerce, Production, Supply And Distribution) Act, 2003 ('Cigarette Prohibition of Advertisements Act'), Section 5 of which reads as under:

"5. Prohibition of advertisement of cigarettes and other tobacco products. –

(1) No person engaged in, or purported to be engaged in the production, supply or distribution of cigarettes or any other tobacco products shall advertise and no person having control over a medium



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shall cause to be advertised cigarettes or any other tobacco products through that medium and no person shall take part in any advertisement which directly or indirectly suggests or promotes the use or consumption of cigarettes or any other tobacco products.

(2) No person, for any direct or indirect pecuniary benefit, shall—

(a) display, cause to display, or permit or authorize to display any advertisement of cigarettes or any other tobacco product; or

(b) sell or cause to sell, or permit or authorize to sell a film or video tape containing advertisement of cigarettes or any other tobacco product; or

(c) distribute, cause to distribute, or permit or authorize to distribute to the public any leaflet, hand-bill or document which is or which contains an advertisement of cigarettes or any other tobacco product; or

(d) erect, exhibit, fix or retain upon or over any land, building, wall, hoarding, frame, post or structure or upon or in any vehicle or shall display in any manner whatsoever in any place any advertisement of cigarettes or any other tobacco product.”

It is apparent that these reels are being made and put up by these influencers at the behest of the tobacco behemoth that is Phillip Morris, who is clearly the ultimate beneficiary. We are quite surprised that these reels continue to be created and widely circulated on your platform where it is easily accessible by children despite there being clear obligations on you to exercise due diligence as per Section 79 (2) of the Information Technology Act 2000 (“IT Act”). Further, as per Rule 3(1)(b) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 you are required to take immediate steps and ensure that your users do not “*host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, store, update or share any information that,*

(i) is defamatory, obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, invasive of another's privacy, including bodily privacy, insulting, or harassing on the basis of gender, libellous, racially, or ethnically objectionable, relating or encouraging money laundering or gambling, or otherwise inconsistent with or contrary to the laws in force;

(ii) is harmful to child

(iii) violates any law for the time being in force;”

Accordingly, we request you to please look into this gross violation of the provisions of Cigarette Prohibition of Advertisements Act which are punishable under Section 22 of the said Act and take necessary steps as per the obligations imposed on you pursuant to Section 79 of the IT Act by virtue of being an ‘intermediary’. In this regard, it is imperative that you take immediate steps to ensure that:

- a. any content which promotes such illegal promotion of cigarettes is blocked;

- b. User accounts from where such reels are being uploaded/shared are identified and restricted and blocked;
- c. Take down such reels immediately;
- d. Users are sensitized against uploading/sharing such illegal promotional reels/videos featuring cigarettes;
- e. Filters are applied to block any reels/videos which refers to any cigarette brands or logos, such as “Marlboro”, “Advance”, “Compact”, “Stellar”, “Shift”, “Define” or which directly/indirectly promotes consumption of cigarettes;
- f. Come a up with a strong and full proof policy to prevent such misuse of the law – it is the need of the hour to stop such cigarette brand advertisements.

Given the wide reach and popularity of your platform, it is important that prompt action be taken to prevent any further damage and to curb this illegal activity. We request you to take pro-active steps to prevent the misuse of your platform for such illegal actions. We hope that as a responsible intermediary, duty bound under the IT Act, you will take prompt action in this regard.

Yours faithfully,



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Annexure: – Links_ Reels Repository (269-links)

Note - This letter has been drafted and edited by our editorial team and has approval of members of
Shram