

# Docs want actors to act responsibly

**STAY FIT** Ask Sanjay Dutt to stop endorsing tobacco products

**HT Correspondent**

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**MUMBAI:** This New Year, doctors and activists want actor Sanjay Dutt to make a healthy resolution.

About 1,500 members of the Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors (MARD) from KEM Hospital and Doctors for You, an NGO working in the area of health and education, have written to Dutt asking him to quit smoking and stop endorsing tobacco products.

"Through this letter, we are requesting him to stop endorsing tobacco products. Dutt has a huge following after the success of films such as *Munnabhai MBBS*. His fans get influenced by such advertisements," said

Dr Ravikanth Singh, president, Doctors for You.

The doctors said they want actors, who are role models for the public, to act responsibly.

"Sachin Tendulkar set a very good example when he refused to endorse an alcohol brand," said Dr Pankaj Nalawade, general secretary, MARD, KEM Hospital.

The letter address to Dutt states that advertisements of tobacco products target teens and youth and the actor's association with the promotional campaign increases the sales by exploiting his influence over the vulnerable community.

The doctors plan to send similar letter to actor Malaika Arora Khan, who is also endorsing a gutkha brand.



■ **Actor Sanjay Dutt endorses a tobacco product.** HT FILE PHOTO

Regardless of whether it contains tobacco, gutkha is harmful as it contains betel nut.

"Sanjay Dutt has seen the pains related to cancer very closely. His father donated heavily for treatment of poor cancer patients through the Nargis

Dutt Trust. He knows how difficult is this addiction. How can he advertise, even though surrogate, for a product that is addictive and causes cancer," said Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, associate professor, head and neck, department, Tata Memorial Hospital.

The doctors are also demanding the removal of posters with Goa Gutkha advertisement from BEST buses and other prime locations in the city. "If we do not get a positive reply from Dutt, then we plan to start different kind of activities as a protest," said Dr Nalawade.

"People love Sanjay Dutt and if he endorses such products, more people would use them," said Anant Christian, anti-tobacco activist from Gujarat.

**ROAD SAFETY FORTNIGHT**

**MEDICAL ASSOCIATION SAYS HIS GUTKA AD GOES AGAINST HIS FATHER'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST CANCER**

## Docs promise Munnabhai jadoo ki jhappi

**Santosh Andhale**

As a New Year resolution, city doctors have requested actor Sanjay Dutt to stop endorsing a brand of gutka and to stop smoking.

Reminding him that his father, late actor and politician Sunil Dutt, had been involved in spreading awareness about cancer, the doctors have written an open letter to the actor asking him to terminate his endorsement contract with a gutka manufacturer.

Sunil Dutt had set up a trust named after Nargis, his wife and Sanjay's mother, who died of cancer. Endorsing the tobacco product is against the philosophy of his father who spent a lot of money and time creating awareness about the disease and the importance of its early detection for effective treatment, the doctors' letter



**File photo of Sanjay Dutt at a shoot for an advertisement. Doctors want him to stop endorsing a gutka brand**

states. "If we do not see an end to this ad by January 26, we will wait outside your house and offer 'jadoo ki jhappi' so that you 'get well soon'... as taught by you," it adds.

In case it is the money that is tempting Dutt to continue his association with the gut-

ka brand, the doctors have even offered to pay him from the donations raised by medical students and resident doctors.

Hospitals involved in cancer treatment, like the Tata Memorial, and groups like Maharashtra Resident Doctors Association (MARD)

and Indian Medical Association, are part of the campaign against use of tobacco products.

Three months ago, doctors had protested against *Guzaarish*, a film that featured posters showing Aishwarya Rai smoking. Many felt that the image should not have been used to promote the movie. Doctors said that these images send a wrong message to impressionable youth who are inclined to imitate Bollywood idols. Doctors had been vocal about their dissatisfaction and had worn black badges to protest the poster.

Dr Ravikanth Singh, convener of Doctors for You, a non-profit organisation working in the medical field, said that a popular actor like Dutt should not endorse tobacco products because he can influence teenagers and young people. "The reason

why a gutka company has signed him for its advertising campaign is to use his popularity to gain new customers. Increase in gutka sales will lead to a proportionate increase in mouth cancer. "India is already the oral cancer capital of the world. We have, therefore, requested him to help stop the advertisement," he said.

Dr Pankaj Nalawade, secretary of MARD, said, "Dutt won us with his character in *Munnabhai*. However, he has broken our hearts by his constant association with gutka, which is recognised as a cancer causing substance even by manufacturers. This endorsement does not suit a man who has witnessed the pain of cancer in his own family. We are waiting for a positive response and will decide our future course of action after January 26."