

## Mandals said no to tobacco

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This year, 1,700 big Ganpati mandals, and 8,300 smaller ones, refused to accept tobacco products' advertisements. The big Ganpati mandals could have made at least Rs 5-crore from the advertisements, but their minds were more than happy to forego the money.

This is perhaps for the first time in Mumbai that all mandals came together to ban tobacco advertisements. Previously, popular mandals like Lalbaugcha Raja, Vile Parlecha Peshwa, Khetwadi, Khumbharwada and Parel used to accept surrogate advertisements of tobacco products. This year, builders, clothing and jewellery brands were approached for the advertisements.

Naresh Dahibawkar, president, Ganeshutsav Samanvay Samiti, the

umbrella organisation of the Ganpati mandals across Mumbai, said, "Our no-tobacco ads initiative was 100 per cent success."

The samiti had instructed mandals to stop accepting tobacco advertisements in 2003, following a ban on tobacco products. But mandals continued to put up sun'ogate advertisements. This year, the samiti issued a mandate that any mandal which promotes tobacco companies will fact action the next year.

Nalin Modi, general secretary, Akhil Khetwadi Sarvajanic Ganeshutsav Mandal, said, "We may have committed mistakes earlier, but now, we are ready to correct them. Tobacco is harmful, and we will not promote its use." Tobacco companies pay around Rs 35,000 to put up hoardings at a single gate, Rs 65,000 for two gates, and about Rs 1 lakh for hoardings at three gates.