

Smoke-free drive targets taxis, autos

Jyoti Shelar

The smoke-free Mumbai campaign is set to enter its second phase, and the plan this time is to make the city transport smoke-free. In phase I, the drive was aimed at making city hotels and restaurants smoke-free.

"We have written to the traffic commissioner as part of the next phase of our campaign," said Dr S Shastri, head of preventive oncology, Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH), which is partnering the initiative along with the BMC and various other organisations in the city.

According to Shastri, the traffic commissioner has already acted on the letter and notified the three zonal regional transport offices



(RTOs).

"We plan to start by putting up do-not-smoke stickers in vehicles such as taxis and auto-rickshaws," Shastri said, adding that the rickshaw and

taxi unions had been roped in for the programme.

Fearing altercations, taxi and rickshaw drivers usually do not stop passengers from smoking. Very often, drivers

themselves smoke while ferrying passengers. The campaign aims at mandatory putting up the stickers in the vehicles so that the non-smoker can alert the one who is breaking the law. By the end of August, about 20,000 stickers will be given to the RTO, and another 20,000 to taxi unions. The stickers will be made mandatory for all vehicles by the RTO.

The campaigners will also send three lakh SMSes, aimed at spreading awareness among Mumbaikars about their right to ensure a 'smoke-free' environment. According to sources, one crore text messages will be sent out to people during the Ganpati festival, while the remaining will be circulated during Navratri and Mumbai marathon.