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**Kick the butt, it's killing rich and poor alike!**

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## Kick the butt, it's killing rich and poor alike!

■ From May 31, all tobacco product packs will bear images of the Scorpio and lungs trying to depict the ill-effects of tobacco

BY STAFF

REPORTER MUMBAI

**D**eepak Kumar, an Additional Commissioner in the Excise Department, would smoke 40 cigarettes. But that was until 2008 when he was diagnosed with throat cancer. Famous among friends and colleagues for his resonant and deep voice, Kumar now depends on an electronic aid to even utter a word.

Similar is the case of cancer surgeon Dr Rajendra Kerkar, who himself suffers from tongue cancer. How-

ever, Kerkar has not quit smoking yet. He says, "After the operation, I had quit smoking for five years, but got addicted to it again."

Another victim of this slow killer is Mohammad Aslam Siddiqui. Aslam, a resident of Kanpur was diagnosed with cancer a day after his marriage. The disease not only affected his health but also his married life. Aslam's wife divorced him after learning about the ailment.



From doctors to administrative officers, cancer takes in all. In fact, Kerkar and Kumar's case is a mirror to the fact that the deadly effects of tobacco are common in all strata of the society.

"Consumption of tobacco products is not restricted to any section of society. In some form or the other tobacco consumption is on a rise," Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, Tata Hospital, said.

Another way to dissuade early or first-time smokers is by effective pictorial warnings on cigarette packets, feels the medical fraternity and NGO's working against tobacco which met at 'Voice of Victim' programme at Tata Memorial hospital. In fact, May 31 onwards all tobacco products will bear pictorial warnings, like images of a scorpion or tobacco-hit lungs.

However, not all agree that a superficial measure like that would effectively keep smokers away. Dr P C Gupta, Director, Healis Sekhasaria, said, "At the present, the warning

labels on tobacco products are considerably diluted and weakened by lobbyists. As per the provision in the Act, they will be revised every six months making it more impactful."

While countries like Bhutan and Ireland have banned the production and sale of cigarettes, Canada and Brazil have strong pictorial warnings on the cigarette packs being sold there.

The only question that worries the victims and anti-tobacco crusaders is: 'How impactful will this new and improved pictorial warning be in curbing the tobacco menace?'