

February 22, 2005

Ms. Sharmila Tagore
Chairperson
Central Board of Film Certification
Bharat Bhawan
91E, Walkeshwar Road
Mumbai- 400006

Respected Ms. Tagore,

We, the group of **SAT (Students Against Tobacco)** functioning under the auspices of **HRIDAY (Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth) -SHAN (Student Health Action Network)**, a Delhi based NGO actively engaged in tobacco control activities. We, who represent students from many schools and colleges of Delhi, are participating in “**The International Day of Action**”, February 22, 2005 being observed by the **Smoke Free Movies Network**. To mark this day, worldwide, tobacco control advocates are holding events to fight against tobacco menace on screen. We are among the 30 groups in 20 countries (Algeria, Argentina, Benin, Cameroon, Canada, Cook Islands, France, Georgia, Israel, Malaysia, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, USA, Vietnam and Zimbabwe) around the world who are taking part in this action.

On this day, we would like to reiterate our request to Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). We had earlier written to a previous Chairman of CBFC, Mr. Arvind Trivedi, requesting him to take measures to stop projection of tobacco use and brand identification of a tobacco product in Bollywood films (Refer *Appendix I*). We received reassuring response from Central Board of Film Certification (Refer *Appendix II*) specifying that under the guidelines of Cinematograph Act, the films are scrutinized to see that the consumption of tobacco or smoking is not encouraged, justified or glamorized through them. We are however, unhappy to observe that not many efforts have been made by CBFC since 2003.

In addition to Cinematograph Act, the government has also imposed a ban on all forms of direct and indirect advertising of tobacco products under the “Cigarettes and other tobacco products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003”. Despite the implementation of these two Acts, we have been observing that there is continued flouting of rules in contemporary Bollywood films. Film stars like Mr. Shah Rukh Khan in *Swades*, Mr. Sanjay Dutt in *Musafir*, Mr. John Abraham in *Elaan*, Mr. Saif Ali Khan in *Ek Hasina Thi*, Mr. Zayed Khan in *Vaada* have been shown promoting smoking. In the film *Swades*, “*Marlboro*” cigarette brand has been highlighted many times in various scenes of this film, which was absolutely unnecessary.

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We would also like to bring to your notice that in the recent film, "*Page 3*" women, have been shown smoking, projecting smoking as a status symbol of high society socialites, further glamorizing this deadly habit. While this may reflect a part of the current reality, repeated and exaggerated projection of this habit in glamorous setting provides the viewer a stimulus to initiate or continue the habit.

A recent WHO study reveals that teenagers, who watch Bollywood characters smoke, are three times more likely to do so and if young people see one of their idols light up on-screen, they are 16 times more likely to view smoking positively.

Indian films make a good smokescreen for tobacco companies as India has the largest film producing industry in the world. Approximately 15 million people watch an Indian film everyday either in theatre or at home on television. A total of 62 tobacco brands have been shown in Bollywood over the last 12 years. The results of this study are frightening and call for an immediate regulatory response to counter these practices which are inimical to public health.

We, again request you to kindly initiate measures to stop projection of smoking and brand identification of a tobacco product in films. Films, which are a much loved medium of entertainment, should not become vehicles for promoting tobacco use by youth. We hope, madam, that you will respond to these concerns and act decisively to protect the health of our people.

With Best Regards

Youth Activists of SHAN
SAT (Student Against Tobacco)