

Committee to tackle doctors' 'cut practice' to meet today

State govt. planning new law to make 'cuts' an offence

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The nine-member committee appointed by the State government to look into the menace of 'cut practice' among doctors will meet on Saturday to find ways to put an end to it. The government is planning to bring in the Cut Practices in Medical Services Act, 2017, that will bring kickbacks under legal purview and aim at action against offenders: If all goes well, Maharashtra will become the first State to have such a law.

A 'cut' is a commission that is offered by one doctor to another for referring a patient. While the Medical Council of India's (MCI)

code of ethics clearly state that splitting fees is wrong, the practice is deep-rooted and has become streamlined over the years.

"The practice exists because no action has been initiated against any doctor till now. We need to formulate a proper law," Dr. Ramakant Panda, a cardiac surgeon and director, Asian Heart Institute, said.

Dr. Panda had triggered a debate on the unethical practice by putting up a hoarding near the airport that said: 'Honest Opinion. No Commission to Doctor'. The ad campaign did not go down well with several doctors, who felt it implied that doctors were part of the un-

ethical practice.

On Friday, an opinion piece in the *British Medical Journal* titled 'We need to end 'cut' practice in Indian healthcare' by Dr. Sanjay Nagral from Mumbai and Dr. Samiran Nundy from New Delhi, both surgeons, said cuts are a long-standing and widespread practice. It said, "They are now so much a part of mainstream healthcare that most doctors have accepted them as a natural accompaniment to patient referrals. What began decades ago as an incentive fee for general practitioners to refer patients to specialists, now includes kickbacks from pathology and radiology establishments.