



INTERVIEW | RAMAKANT PANDA

## 'This is not just a marketing gimmick'

The cardiac surgeon whose hoarding sparked the commissions debate, tells **Jyoti Shelar** the idea of putting it up at the airport was to spread the message to the entire nation

Cardiac surgeon Ramakant Panda's advertisement on referral commissions has triggered a heated debate in the health-care community. Some doctors have come out in support, but a large slice have criticised the campaign. Dr. Panda spoke to *The Hindu* about what led him to take up the cause.

**What prompted you to start this campaign?**

■ In the last few years, there have been several articles in newspapers and medical journals, but it has never been started as a movement. I wanted to start this campaign at the right time.

Suddenly, healthcare has come to the consciousness of people. They are looking at it as an area where the cost is very high, and they cannot afford it. In the last six months, there have been a lot of efforts in cutting down healthcare costs. By putting an end to the cut practice, one can drastically cut down the unnecessary treatment that is indirectly also a cause for costly healthcare. As much as 25% of the treatment done in the country is over treat-

ing money from your colleagues or coming out against the practice? I want the IMA to show me one doctor that they have penalised in the past five years.

**Many doctors say that it is nothing but a marketing gimmick by AHI...**

■ If that was the case, I would have just focused on Bombay and then left it there. Why would I reach out to people all over India?

**Doctors say that you are washing dirty linen in the public...**

■ The linen is so dirty. How are you ever going to clean it? The moment you start, it is going to stink. Since 80% of the doctors are into this, they are simply hiding this dirty linen. And now it is stinking all over the place.

**AHI is known for aggressive marketing and overpricing as well. Many feel that this crusade is a bit odd.**

■ Again, it is not a marketing gimmick. If it was, I would not have taken it to the government level.