

After Bombay HC, Delhi Court Stops Patanjali Soap Ad

It allegedly disparages rival brands; latest order comes on a Reckitt plea a day after HUL got a similar injunction

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New Delhi: The Delhi and Bombay high courts have ordered Patanjali Ayurved to stop airing its latest television commercial for soaps, which allegedly disparaged some rival brands, including Reckitt Benckiser's Dettol and Hindustan Unilever's Pears and Lifebuoy.

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday issued an ad interim injunction restraining the Baba Ramdev-owned company from

airing the controversial advertisement while hearing a petition filed by Reckitt Benckiser, maker of Dettol soap.

A day earlier, Hindustan Unilever had got an injunction from the Bombay High Court to stop airing the ad.

The Patanjali commercial allegedly took a dig at popular soap brands of HUL and Reckitt Benckiser by showing soaps similar to brands such as Dettol, Pears and Lifebuoy, and referring to them as 'Dhitol', 'Tears' and 'Lifejoy', while urging consumers to shun "chemical-based" soaps used by movie stars.

Nancy Roy, the lawyer representing Reckitt before the Delhi High Court, alleged the Patanjali commercial



was initially uploaded on Youtube before airing on television on Sunday. "Our prayer was seeking injunction against this ad and damages in excess of ₹1 crore," she said.

Both the Delhi High Court and the Bombay High Court have restrained Patanjali from airing the ad till their next hearing on September 18. Patanjali did not respond to an email sent on Tuesday seeking its comments on the development as of press time Wednesday. A Hindustan Unilever spokesperson confirmed the ad interim injunction but declined to comment because "the matter is sub-judice".

Ramdev's Patanjali has burst into the national consumer scene in recent years with a host of products, becoming a force to reckon with in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) market in the country and prompting larger rivals such as HUL, Colgate Palmolive and Reckitt

Benckiser to ramp up their 'natural' and herbal-based offerings.

Patanjali's toothpaste brand Dant Kanti, for example, increased its share to 6.2% in the country's toothpaste market during the quarter ended June from 2.2% a year earlier, helping the firm become the country's fourth-largest toothpaste company. Big players in the segment, Colgate and Hindustan Unilever reported fall in their market share during the same period. Market leader Colgate's share fell 1.2% to 52.7% while HUL's share in the country's toothpaste market slipped 2.4% to 17.6%.

Ramdev's FMCG forays have not been without controversies. Last year, Advertising Standard Council of India (ASCI) had termed an ad for Patanjali honey 'misleading' and its purity claims as 'unsubstantiated', and asked the company to either withdraw it or modify it after Dabur complained to the advertising body.