

From Drug Action Forum, W. B.

THE TIMES OF INDIA, KOLKATA

FRIDAY, JUNE 29, 20

## WOMEN MAY DEVELOP BREAST CANCER: NGO

# Doctors up in arms against contraceptive experiment

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The Times of India News Service

KOLKATA: If women take an injection of Net-En, they will not conceive for the next six months. The experiment is due to start on women at the R.G. Kar Hospital from the first week of July.

But the experiment is harmful, feel many leading gynaecologists of the city.

The Drugs Action Forum, an NGO formed by them, has served an ultimatum, threatening to go on a hunger strike if the drug is administered on even a single woman.

"This drug is carcinogenic, and in the long run the women are likely to develop breast cancer. The drug will also cause loss of calcium and these women are likely to suffer from abnormal periods for the rest of their lives", claimed Dr Sanjib Mukherjee. He is also the vice president of the Forum.

Net-En first came to India during the early eighties. "The irony is that, Schering, the German manufacturer of the drug, could not introduce it there. It was used only on lunatics and under trials on an experimental basis but after the side effects became pronounced, even this was discontinued", Mukherjee claimed.

The Forum filed a case in the Supreme Court and got an injunction. "The Med-

ical Council of India, the Drug Controller and the union ministry of health and family welfare were instructed by the Supreme Court not to use the drug for contraception", said Sujit Das, vice president of the Forum. Das is best known as one of the doctors who was appointed by the Government of India to study the Bhopal Gas tragedy.

Last month Government of India requested the Supreme Court to allow the administration of the injection on an experimental basis since population explosion had become a grave problem.

The apex court permitted the experiment to be carried out in one hospital in every state. The R.G. Kar Hospital has been chosen for the programme in West Bengal.

The head of the Gynaecological and Family Planning department of the hospital, Ashoke Mondal said, "I am a government servant and I have to execute what is asked of me. Even if I know it is not authorised to tell you if the injection is harmful."

State health minister, Surya Kanta Misra was categorical: "The Forum tells me that the injection is harmful. I will ask my department to check this out and if it is harmful I will not allow this injection to be used anywhere in my state, no matter what the centre says".