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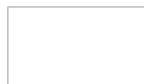
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How BBMP fooled everybody, hookah, line and sinker

Twenty-two days after schoolchildren were found consuming hookah during a raid at Seven Hills snooker club, the BBMP health department is yet to lodge a police complaint against the club owner.





Twenty-two days after schoolchildren were found consuming hookah during a raid at Seven Hills snooker club, the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) health department is yet to lodge a police complaint against the club owner.

"Not registering a police complaint against the owner is wrong on the part of BBMP officers. We have to take stern action against the culprits," said BBMP commissioner MK Shankarlinge Gowda.

But since children were involved, the issue is sensitive and it should be handled carefully, he said. Shantalanagar ward corporator K Shivakumar, who gave the tip-off to the raiding team, said he was shocked to note that no FIR had been filed against the club owner.

"I received the information from a friend and alerted the health department. It is shocking that the BBMP officers did not register any complaint in the police station against the owner. It is a serious issue involving students," he said.

But there may be more to this incident than meets the eye, said a BBMP source on the condition of anonymity.

"Indeed, the raid was conducted after corporator Shivakumar complained to them. But zonal health officers are aware of illegal activities happening in their respective areas but turn a blind eye as long as they receive their 'share'. Second, the health officer in this case produced only 14 cigarette packets to the health committee whereas they had seized more packets including foreign packs," the source said.

Additional commissioner of police T Sunil Kumar said the rule banning smoking in public places had been brought by the BBMP and it was being enforced by conducting raids on places where it was violated.

Police are empowered to take suo moto action whenever they find such violations, he said.

"But the raid at the snooker club was being conducted by the BBMP team. Hence, the police did not take up any action. Ideally, the jurisdictional police could have taken some action against the management for allowing and indirectly encouraging students and minors to smoke. I do not know why no action has been taken," Kumar said.

The BBMP source, however, said that even though during mayor SK Nataraj's time, the council had passed a resolution to ban all hookah joints in the city, the resolution was still not approved by the state government and notified yet.

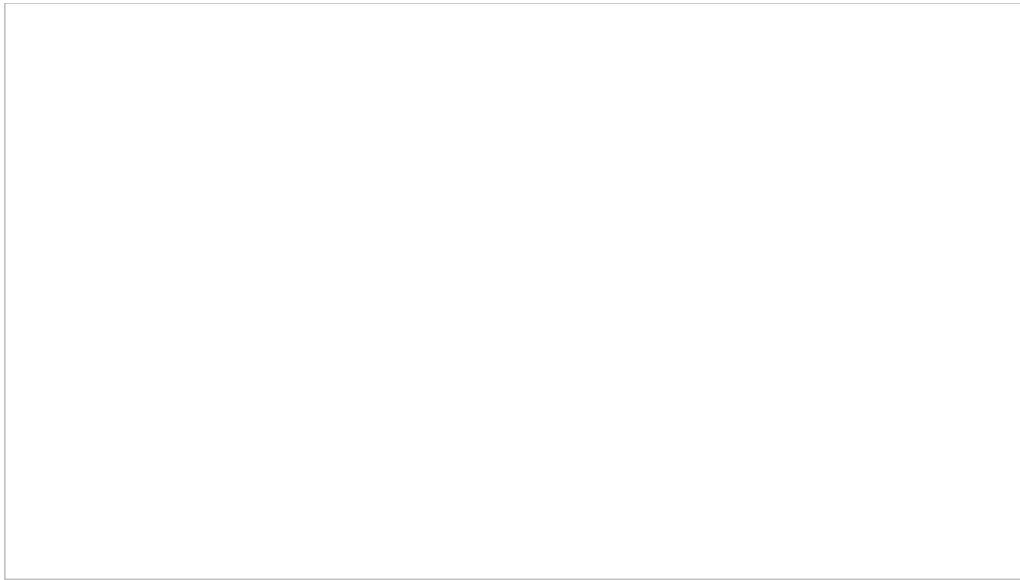
Defending his role for not registering a police complaint against the club owner, BBMP deputy health officer GK Suresh, who headed the raid on the snooker club, said he had sealed the club and slapped a fine of Rs16,000 on the owner.

"If we lodge a complaint against the owner, it will be problem for the students who were present at the time. The human rights commission and the women and child welfare department will take up the issue and it will be problem for the students. So we levied a fine on the club owner under COPTA," he said.

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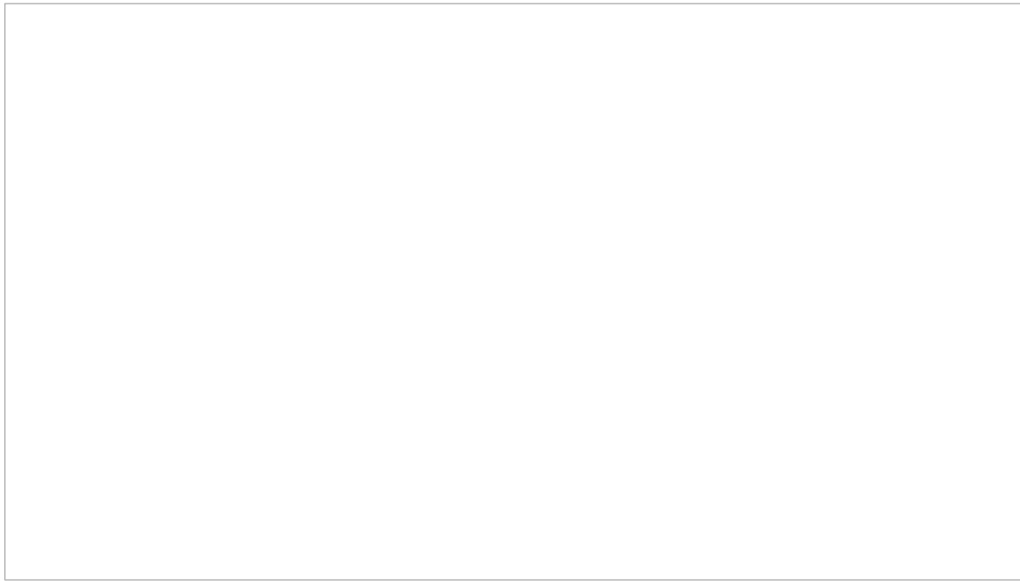
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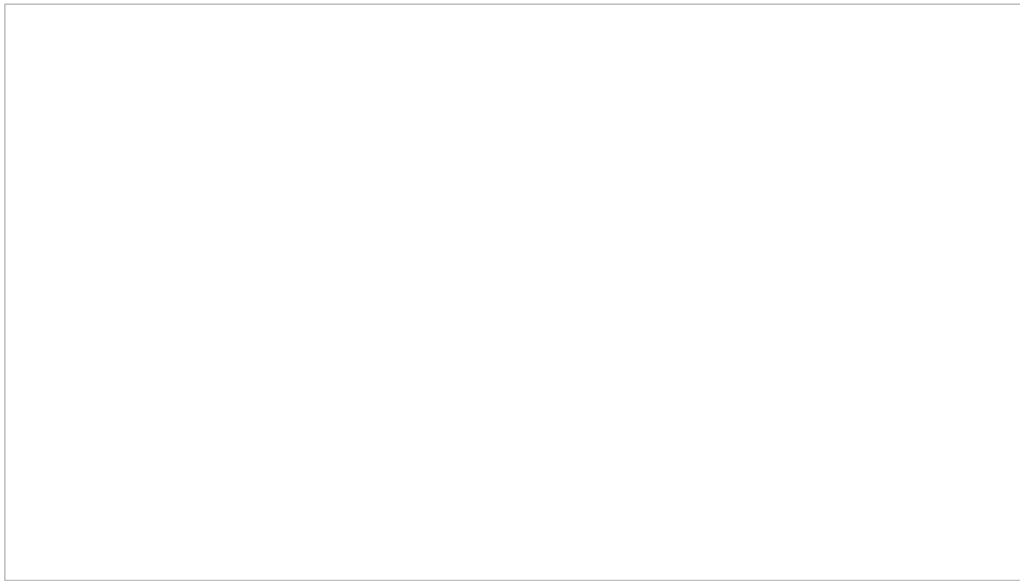
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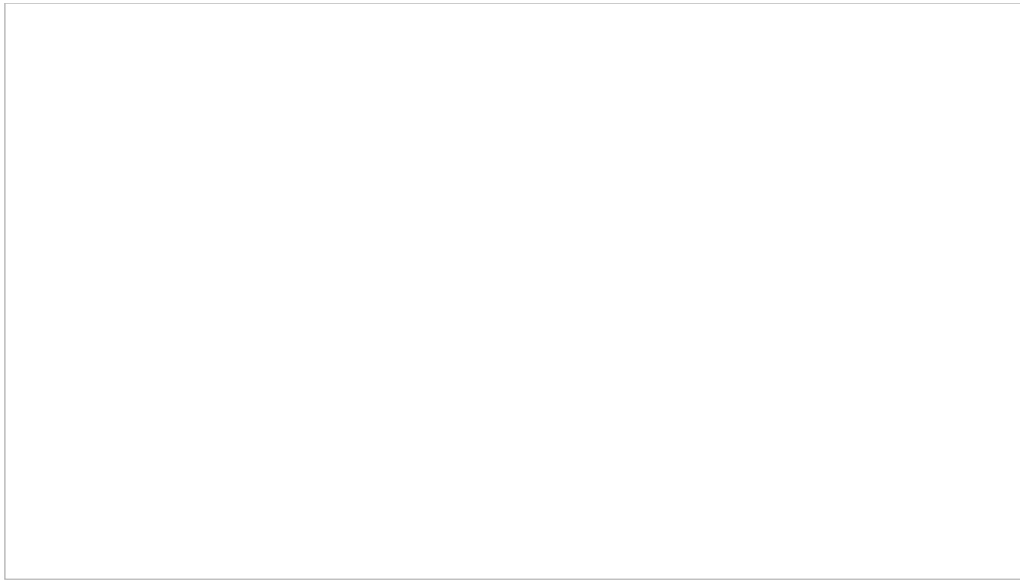
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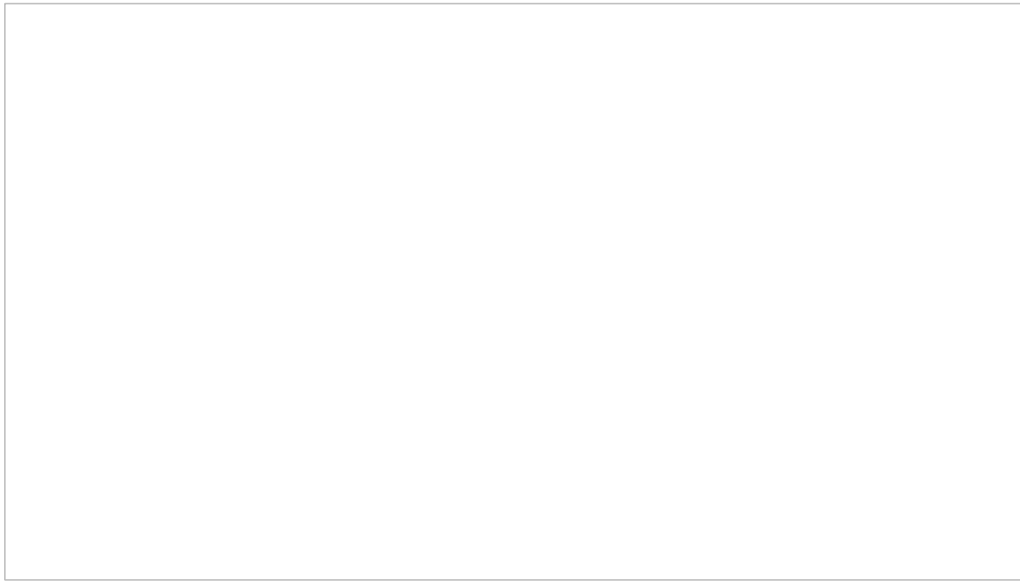
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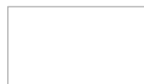
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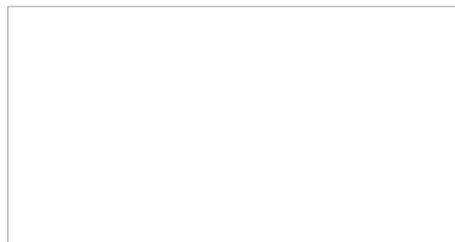
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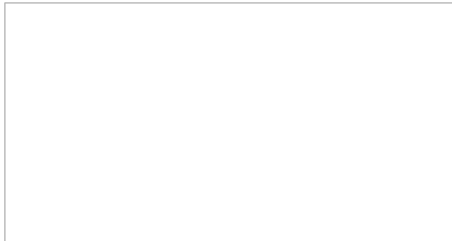
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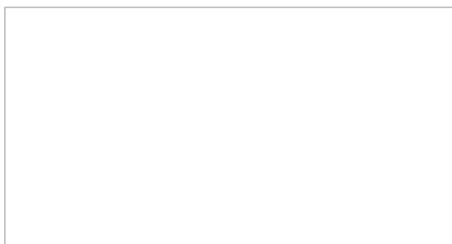
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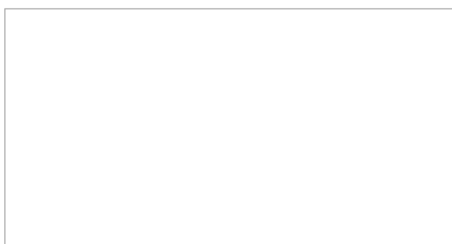
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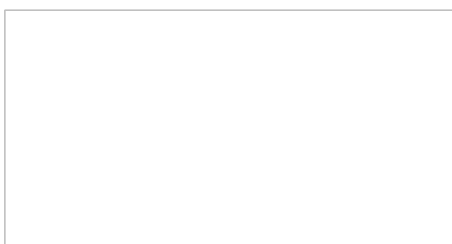
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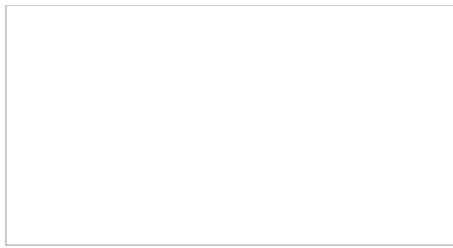
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