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Schoolkids caught in hookah bar

Surprise raid on illegal snooker club leaves Palike officers stunned

DHNS

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In a shocking revelation, a raid on an illegal bar by Palike officials revealed several schoolchildren in their uniforms smoking hookahs, cheroots and cigarettes.

Monday's raid by the Palike on Seven Hills Snooker Club at Gold Tower on Residency Road was an eye-opener for the officers as they found a large number of students from both the Bishop Cotton's boys and girls schools puffing away.

The snooker club was reportedly being run illegally as the building would remain locked from the outside. The students would sneak in through the backdoor and indulge in illegal activities, the officers said. The raid was carried out following a complaint by local corporator Shivakumar.

Rude shock

A Palike officer requesting anonymity said: "As soon as we walked into the club, we saw the students, who cannot be above the age of 14, sitting amid clouds of smoke. The raid came as a rude shock to them and the managers of the snooker club as they ran helter-skelter to escape being caught."

The officer added that the owner of the snooker club even tried to escape action by offering a bribe.

The Palike officers seized five hookahs, 25 packets of flavoured molaser tobacco, some cheroots and a small wooden showcase with 14 cigarette packets.

Based on a complaint by the Palike officers, Ashoka Nagar police have registered a case against the owner of the club under Prohibition of Smoking in Public Places Act.

Education minister reacts

Minister for Primary and Secondary Education Vishveshwara Hegde Kageri called the incident "a tragedy" and placed the blame on the schools and parents for not checking on the activities of the children.

"The government alone cannot do anything as we cannot supervise each and every child. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that their students are not heading in the wrong direction," said Kageri.

He, however, promised measures to see to it that such incidents are not repeated.

Parents alerted

In the evening, parents of children studying in the Bishop Cotton Boys' School received messages warning them that their wards will be rusticated if they are found in a bar that allows smoking of hookah or drinking alcohol.

The message said:

"Dear parents, please be informed that if any student, wearing our school uniform is found in any parlour or bar that encourages hookah smoking or alcoholic beverage (sic), he will be rusticated immediately. This announcement is under instruction from the Chairman of the Board of Management, Principal, Bishop Cotton Boys' School."

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