

Furore over puffing French general's photo in book

A photograph of a late French general smoking cigarette published in a social science book of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has caused the anti-tobacco activists to up their ante.

The National Organization for Tobacco Eradication (NOTE), a Goa based non-profit organisation, has written to the NCERT, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Goa government demanding withdrawal of the controversial photograph from the class 10 textbook.

On page 44 on the chapter 'The Communist Movement and Vietnamese Nationalism', the late French general Henry Navare is shown smoking a cigarette.

'I am astonished to see such a mistake committed by an institution like NCERT,' NOTE general secretary Shekhar Salkar told IANS.

'The picture of a military man smoking projects a macho man image. This will be read by millions of students and this will definitely have a negative impact on students,' Salkar added.

NCERT prepares books for all schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). NCERT authorities said that they would take appropriate action after verifying it.

'We have given the copyright of the CBSE books to the Goa government. If such a mistake has crept in, then we will verify and take necessary actions to amend it,' NCERT spokesman B.C. Patra told IANS.

'We will verify whether the mistake has entered at the head office level or at the Goa government level,' he added.

Salkar has also complained to Bhaskar Nayak, chairman of the Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education. 'Nayak has promised to take action soon.'

'It is ironical that while the central government is attempting to enlighten the citizens about the menace of tobacco consumption, the education department is oblivious to the clandestine propagation of smoking habit,' Salkar added.

Salkar said he and many such activists have requested the authorities to withdraw the illustrations and issue fresh books.

Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss has been calling for a blanket ban of smoking scenes in the Indian film industry.

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