

Kerala govt plans to lower the alcohol content in liquor drinks

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THE KERALA GOVERNMENT'S plan to make alcoholic beverages with low alcoholic content resonates with the global trend of increasing sales of ready-to-drink (RTD) beverages with less alcohol content in exciting flavours.

The state government plan is to produce alcoholic beverages with low alcoholic content from fruits and crops other than foodgrains. The intent is to promote the agricultural sector and small-scale manufacturing sector of the state, rather than competing with major liquor makers, state excise minister MV Govindan Master told *FE*.

The budget for the next fiscal has kept aside ₹2 crore for the project meant for the production of ethanol and other value-added products from tapioca at Tuber Crops Research, Thiruvananthapuram, on a pilot basis.

“Currently, the state produces only 20% of the liquor that is consumed. If we can raise the share at least marginally we can generate employment in

the manufacturing sector and provide better returns to our farmers,” the minister said.

The policy of the state government is to engage the cooperative sector in the procurement of fruits like cashew apple, pineapple and plantain, and also to allow fruit-based wineries in the private sector.

The government also believes that Kerala-made alcoholic beverages will have a global market.

A lager made in the UK by a Keralite using Kerala Matta rice grown in the Western Ghats and named ‘Komban’, the name for a majestic tusker in Malayalam, is gaining popularity in the UK market. Mandakini, an unaged sugarcane-based spirit with Indian flavours is also doing good business in Canada. Three men originally from Ernakulam district are behind the beverage and they say that the inspiration is arrack or locally-distilled liquor made in Kerala.

The state is mostly a brown spirit market, with

brandy being the favourite and having a market share of 45-50% and is followed by the rum.

But the pandemic and in-house consumption of liquor have made a paradigm shift in the consumption pattern.

Vinod Giri, director general of Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (India) (CIABC) said that consumers are now experimenting with experiences beyond the pure functional benefit of alcohol which, besides adding new consumers to the alcohol category, accelerates social acceptance of alcoholic beverages as a normal consumer product. CIABC is the industry association which represents alcohol beverages companies.

“We are witnessing a spate of innovations in the Indian alcoholic beverage market. We saw the emergence of Indian craft gin earlier and the now ready-to-drink segment is witnessing brand launches with diversified offerings. This is a healthy sign of market progression,” he added.

According to a survey conducted by market research and data company YouGov, it is wine and beer that is more popular in India than whisky. The survey also pointed out that females in India seem to be driving the growth of wine in the market.

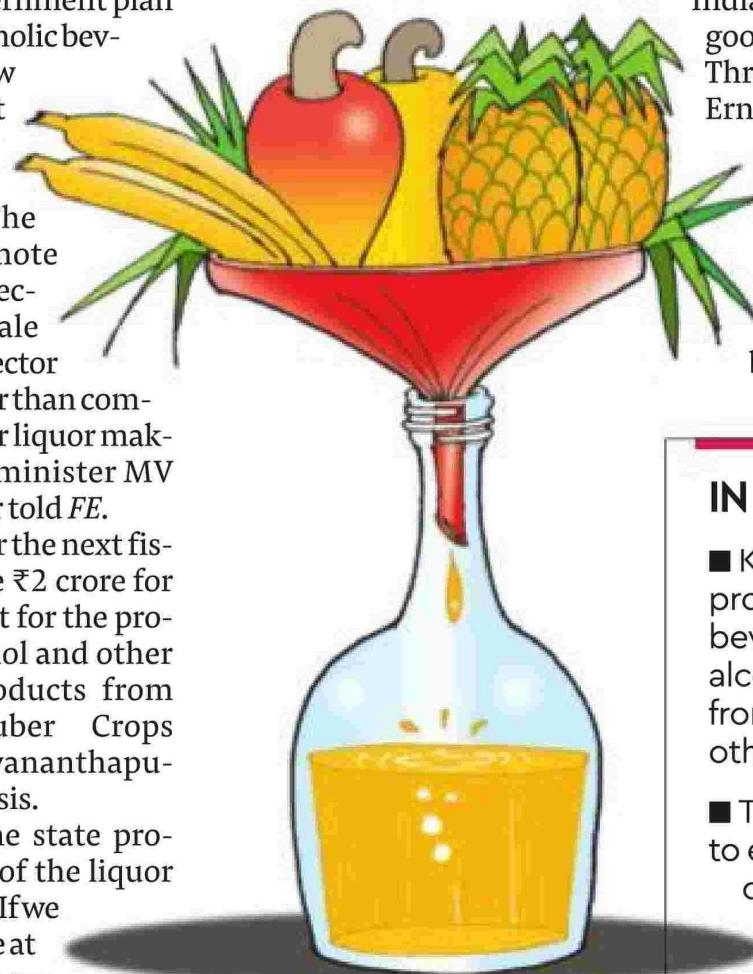


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IN GOOD SPIRITS

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