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Liquor shops: Local bodies to have no say

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Local bodies will no longer have a say in allowing liquor shops in their limits. The Cabinet on Wednesday decided to issue an ordinance amending the relevant clauses of the Kerala Municipalities Act and the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act in this regard.

According to the government, the amendments are being made to enable the uniform implementation of the Abkari Act across the state and to end the discrimination between existing liquor licencees and new applicants.

The government move is intended to enable the Kerala State Beverages Corporation to open outlets shut along highways following the Supreme Court verdict in new locations. In many locations, the local bodies concerned have also said a big 'no' to new bars and beer and wine parlours. The state government plans to declare the new liquor policy by June 30.

Bevco's attempts to relocate the liquor shops had triggered stiff opposition in local communities. Bevco was forced to shift 179 of its 270 outlets following SC order. Even now, Bevco is struggling to open 90 of the shut-down outlets in new locations.

This is what the Municipalities Act says: "A municipality may notify by publication in the Gazette or in any other manner as may be prescribed that no place within the municipal area shall be used for any one or more of the purposes specified 24 (in the rules made in this behalf) or for any other trade without licence and except in accordance with the conditions specified therein and where the licence is for running hostels, restaurants, eating houses, coffee houses, Abkari shop, laundries, travel agency or barber saloons, the licence shall always contain and be deemed to contain a condition that admission or service therein shall be available to the public."

Cabinet Appointments

Raju Narayana Swamy, who was removed as Agriculture Secretary last week following an open feud with Biju Prabhakar, appointed Principal Secretary of P&ARD.

Finance Resources Secretary Minhaj Alam given additional charge of Tax Department.

Housing Commissioner K N Satheesh made director of Industries and Commerce Dept.

Chengannoor sub-collector S Chandrasekhar appointed

Thalassery sub collector.

Fisheries Dept Additional Chief Secretary James Varghese given additional charge of Forest and Wildlife department and Tax (Excise) department.