

Hindu Business Line

Restaurants body wants legal age for drinking cut

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Clip: 1 of 1

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You can choose your electoral representative or even get married at 18 years. But you cannot drink till you are 21 or 25, depending on the State you are in, laments the National Restaurants Association of India (NRAI), making a plea to reduce the age limit to 18 years.

In Tamil Nadu, the minimum legal age for drinking is 18 years, in Delhi it is 25 and in Maharashtra it is 21 years – though the State Government proposes to increase it to 25 years.

“It is strange. You can vote, get a driving license at 18, but cannot drink,” the NRAI President Mr Samir Kuckreja, told *Business Line*.

GROWTH DAMPENERS

The recommendation is part of a first comprehensive study prepared by the NRAI – White Paper on the Indian Restaurant Industry 2010 – which highlights several issues hampering the growth of

the Rs 43,000-crore industry.

Pointing out that the existing minimum legal age restriction is not adhered to in several States, the report said that, in fact, it adds to the general confusion.

CUMBERSOME LICENSING

Any where between 10 and 12 basic licences going up to 50 sometimes need to be taken before setting up a restaurant. And the licences cost about Rs 6 lakh or more for one outlet.

Some food laws governing the restaurants are as old as 60 years. And there is no clarity on excise norms, the report said.

NRAI further demands recognition as an industry, single window clearances for licences, rapid implementation of General Sales Tax, uniform implementation of standards by the industry and investment in relevant training institutes.

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