

Hic! Kudare for you, vote for us

Manu Aiyappa | TNN

Bangalore: Political parties seem to be facing a tipsy problem. But smart that they are, they are finding new hiccuping ways to hoodwink police and excise officials to offer liquor to voters and party workers.

Forget issuing coupons or tokens. This time, the parties have introduced codes to identify the liquor brands on offer. Such codes are as simple as they get: Raja for whiskey and Kudare (horse) for Rum. The numeral and initials on the coupon indicate the number of bottles and outlet.

If you are keen on getting one, the task is quite simple, say sources in the know of the business. Take a voter ID card and queue up outside the makeshift election offices of major political parties. Collect a coupon, which is valid currency at the local wine shop or bar with its owners having been paid a tidy sum in advance by the candidate. Wait for your turn and collect a bottle or a crate that's marked on your slip, and you are free to party.

Another method is to distribute the coupons to voters along with other inducements. It is done at night, after 10, in the slums in a bid to capture all the votes there. "In my area there were over 40 booths. For each designated booth I employed at least 10 youths who could go around and distribute coupons to the targeted people, not once but on three or four occasions," explained a booth-level leader employed by a BJP candidate in Bangalore. It's not just liquor. Coupons that could be exchanged for freebies at jewellery shops, novelty stores and provision stores are also distributed in many constituencies. More interesting is the practice is shockingly common in urban pockets of Bangalore with a number of wealthy businessmen and real-estate tycoons entering the fray. However, the officials at Chief Electoral Office said: "So far, we have not received any complaint. In case a specific case is brought to our notice, we will take action."

