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# PepsiCo plans big in state

**HT Correspondent**  
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THE NANO might have rolled out of Bengal but all hope is not yet lost, it seems. Multinational beverage giant PepsiCo is all set to have a mega-plant in the state within the next two years.

PepsiCo, which produces the global favourite soft drink Pepsi and popular snacks brands Lays and Kurkure, is working on expanding facilities and capacity at its exiting plant at Sankrail in Howrah.

"We recently added four more acres to our existing 10 acres-campus and will invest a total of Rs 250 crore till expansion work at the plant is complete. It might take another

two years," said vice-president (operations) Animesh Banerjee. While initial investment was Rs 140 crore, another Rs 110 crore would be invested over the next two years.

In effect the Sankrail plant would become the global giant's largest manufacturing base in India, producing packets of Lays, Kurkure and other innovative edible products the company would launch in the future, Banerjee said.

The plant could also become a major centre for producing Aliva, the cracker brand PepsiCo launched in the city on Monday, which is present-

ly being manufactured only from PepsiCo's Ranjangaon facility at Pune.

The MNC's executive vice-president (marketing), Vidur Vyas, pointed out that besides investments in the plant close to Kolkata, the company's supply chain and distribution network were also in the process of being spruced up so that Aliva could be circulated using the same system. "Kurkure, which was our first indigenous product and available only in India, is one of the biggest brands in Kolkata and other parts of eastern India. We are hoping that our latest innovation Aliva will become even a bigger hit than Kurkure," he said.

Vyas pointed out that while

the company would continue to manufacture products under its international brand Lays, the focus was more on locally relevant tastes and Aliva was being considered as the company's biggest innovation in the last 10 years, since the launch of Kurkure in the mid-1990s.

"Aliva comes in four flavours, all of which are locally preferred where the spices are grounded and mixed with the dough before the crackers are baked. Our studies revealed that most people were looking at snacks that are both healthy and tasty. Aliva, made of wheat and lentils, is meant to be just that," he said.

letters@hindustantimes.com