

Allow liquor sale; illicit trade burden on exchequer: CIABC to ten states

NEW DELHI: The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has urged 10 states to allow sale of alcoholic beverages saying that a blanket ban during the lockdown to contain Coronavirus has resulted in sale of illicit and spurious liquor while causing burden on exchequer.

The body noted that the nationwide lockdown has resulted in the shutdown of all wholesale and retail shops selling alcoholic beverages.

It said the need to close on-shops (bars) is well understood in light of social distancing.

The CIABC, which is the apex body of the Indian alcoholic beverage industry, has sent letters on Monday to chief ministers of 10 states -- Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Pun-



jab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

CIABC Director General Vinod Giri stated in the letter that there are growing reports of sale of illicit and spurious liquor in the state which can potentially lead to serious health hazards for people as well as create adverse law and

order situation.

It has also requested all state governments to extend all liquor licences and approvals till April 30 or one additional month post lockdown, whichever is later.

Giri said alcohol is one of the most important sources of revenue for state govern-

ments and by shutting down retail shops, states are depriving themselves of the tax revenues that are so vitally required in fighting the Coronavirus pandemic.

He also said some people need alcohol on medical grounds that should also be considered.

The CIABC, which includes most major Indian companies that manufacture and market their product range in India and abroad, pleaded for permitting sale of alcoholic beverages from off-shops (retail outlets) in the state during the lockdown period.

It suggested that the state governments may do so by placing reasonable control measures such as curtailed shop timings, and directing outlets to strictly follow social

distancing norms.

The body also asked for issue of online permits and permissions enabling wholesalers in a state to receive and supply stocks to off-shops during prescribed hours.

It also pleaded for issue of relevant permits, permissions and approvals to facilitate stock movement and receipt to and within the state.

The CIABC said recognising the threats to public health and law and order, some state governments have taken proactive measures and directed relaxation in shutdown orders for alcoholic beverages shops.

Some have also mooted the idea of allowing home delivery of alcoholic beverages to deserving cases, it added. **MPOST**