

Allow phase-wise opening of alcoholic beverage industry, online sale: CIBAC to Govt

As the sector may face financial difficulties and job losses due to the lockdown on account of Covid-19 pandemic

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Liquor manufacturing association CIBAC has urged Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal to allow phase-wise opening of the alcoholic beverages industry as the sector may face financial difficulties and job losses due to the lockdown on account of Covid-19 pandemic.

In its letter to the Commerce Minister, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) said that since the lockdown was ordered, all wholesale and retail trade has been closed.

“We seek an urgent phase-wise opening of the alcoholic beverage industry in conformity with COVID-19 prevention guidelines,” the letter said, adding that trucks are stranded, distribution warehouses are locked with stock and retail shops are sitting on unsold stock.

“The industry which contributes almost Rs 2-lakh crores by way of various taxes, sustains livelihood of nearly 40 lakh farmers, and employs nearly 20 lakh people directly and indirectly is in dire straits,” CIABC Director General Vinod Giri said.

He also demanded extension of excise year for three

months till June 30 and online sale of liquor.

“What has compounded the problems for alcoholic beverage industry is the fact that excise policy for many states come to an end on March 31. Prior to that date, there are several statutory requirements that ought to be met by companies for them to keep continuity of operations,” he said.

He added that a prolonged shut down of industry will not only have a huge economic cost on companies, it may also force lakhs of workers into joblessness.

“Shops should be asked to enrol for home delivery

through online applications. Government may charge a fee, this being an addition to license. Each qualifying shop should be given 3-4 movement passes for home delivery personnel. Customers may place order online on over phone, along with an ID proof establishing age. Government may limit amount of liquor delivered or frequency of delivery as it deems fit,” he noted.

Giri said that since social distancing will be new normal going forward, the government should consider institutionalising home delivery as a separate channel administered online.