

CIABC urges states to convince Centre to begin liquor sale in non-COVID zones

NEW DELHI: Fearing huge financial losses and job cuts, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has urged states to impress upon the Centre about an urgent need to start sale of liquor in non-COVID zones.

Pointing out that the states have already lost around Rs 20,000 crore in revenues during the lockdown period so far, the apex body of the Indian alcoholic beverage industry has urged the Centre as well as states to allow opening of liquor shops while strictly following all social distancing guidelines, besides considering online sales to check overcrowding at outlets.

In its letter written to all state chief ministers (barring states which are under prohibition), the CIABC has pleaded “the state governments should take up the matter once again with the Centre to permit production, distribution and sales of alcoholic beverages outside containment zones, in conformity with COVID-19 guidelines”.

“Constitutionally, alcohol is a state matter, and hence



it is state government which should unequivocally be the only authority to permit or not permit trade in alcohol,” the letter said.

Pointing out that the governments need to bring in systemic changes in the way the alcoholic beverage industry works to ensure social distancing in future, the CIABC has asked the state governments to impress upon the Centre to push for technology-based controls in place of physical man-based controls on production/warehousing sites and on stock in transit.

It has also sought addition of new sale channels which do not need gathering of people such as home deliveries through dedicated portals or government’s websites.

Noting that in these difficult times when entire industry and economic activities are shut, the states’ coffers are taking a big hit, CIABC Director General Vinod Giri told PTI, “This is the second letter which we have written to the chief ministers since the lockdown began urging them to take up the matter of opening liquor industry with the Centre.”