

Lakhs of litres of beer may go down the drain

Liquor worth Rs 700 crore 'stuck' in northern states

NEW DELHI: As the coronavirus-forced lockdown stretches out, the 250-odd microbreweries across the country are staring at a loss of around eight lakh litres of fresh beer, according to industry experts.

Not only this, around 1.2 million cases of Indian-Made Foreign Liquor worth Rs 700 crore are "stuck" in northern states, except Delhi, as with the start of the new financial year, the sellers need the nod of respective state governments to clear the stock which could not be used due to the lockdown restrictions.

Ishan Grover, who is a brewery consultant, said that unlike bottled beer, fresh beer or craft beer has a short life.

Several brewers in Gurgaon have started draining beer as the plants need electricity to maintain a specific temperature for keeping the beer fresh, he said.

According to Craft Brewers Association of India, all plants storing about 8 lakh litres of fresh beer have remained shut due to the nationwide lockdown and if a

solution is not found at the earliest, lakhs of litres of brewed beer will go down the drain.

As the Centre has further extended the lockdown for two weeks, the association has demanded that microbreweries should be allowed to start take-away facility with the help of beer growlers so that their business is not affected.

"Several relaxations have been given in latest guidelines, but beer bars and clubs have not been given any

relaxation.

"We should be allowed to start take-away facility with beer growlers. By doing this, social-distancing can strictly be followed," Nakul Bhonsle, president of Maharashtra Craft Brewers Association of Indian, told *PTI*.

Bhonsle said that in around 35 countries such a facility is in place for years and people take away fresh beer in growlers.

Sibi Venkataraju, who runs brewpub Toit in Ben-

galuru and is the national officer bearer of Craft Brewers Association of India, said that there are 250-odd microbreweries in the country and they provide employment to around 50,000 people.

He said that the beer plants have remained shut since the lockdown came into force on March 25.

Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) general director Vinod Giri said that they have estimated that around



1.2 million cases of IMFL are stuck due to the lockdown in northern states, except Delhi.

"We will need approval of state governments to sell the old stock of 1.2 million cases of IMFL" in the new financial year, Giri told *PTI*. (*PTI*)