

# Want liquor? Take e-token to get in line

## Govt Will Also Deploy Marshals Outside Stores To Ensure Order

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**New Delhi:** The chaos surrounding the sale of alcohol in the capital has forced Delhi government to put in place a token system for consumers at city liquor stores. The risk of Covid-19 infection posed by the presence of people at the wine and beer outlets has also reached the courts, where a petition sought directions on online sale and home delivery of alcohol.

The excise department started a web link, [www.qtoken.in](http://www.qtoken.in), where a customer can select an outlet and book a time slot, giving details such as name, address, identity document and preferred date and time to purchase liquor. The token with a QR code is relayed on the phone. According to officials, only 50 tokens will be issued per shop per hour to keep the number of customers in check. "The customer can buy liquor after producing the identity card mentioned while booking the slot," explained an excise official.

Though Delhi government allowed 160 government-run liquor stores to open in the city from Monday, the unmanageable rush at the outlets forced police to close many of them midway and, according to officials, not more than 80 shops transacted business in the past couple of days. Deputy commissioner (excise) Sandeep Mishra had asked store managers on Monday to arrange barricading and multiple queues and deployment of marshals to oversee strict compliance to social distancing norms.

All the permitted shops are likely to open on Friday. To ease the situation, the government might also allow some private stores meeting Union home ministry criteria to operate from Friday or Saturday. "The process to identify such private

shops is already on. Around 30 shops have been shortlisted," disclosed an official.

Meanwhile, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies requested deputy CM Manish Sisodia to allow home delivery of liquor, while permitting more shops, both government and private, to remain open for longer hours. The body's director general, Vinod Giri, also demanded the withdrawal at the earliest of the 70% special corona fee else customers would shift to the neighbouring states where liquor is now relatively cheaper.

Another excise official said the issue of home delivery of liquor could be resolved by the weekend. The matter also reached Delhi high court on Thursday, with a petition seeking direction to Delhi government to start online sale and home delivery of liquor.

The plea, likely to be heard next week, argues such measures will discourage people from collecting in large numbers at wine and beer shops, thus increasing the risk of spreading the novel coronavirus. It cited media reports to say the government had failed to control the crowds at the liquor shops that had reopened after 47 days.

The petition wanted Delhi government to evolve a policy permitting online sale of liquor and delivery to the consumers' homes. It said it wasn't advocating a stop to liquor sales since this would lead to a major revenue dip for the state government, only seeking a judicial direction on steps to balance revenue generation with social distancing.

NGO Civil Safety Council of India, however, had filed a petition in the high court on Wednesday demanding the closure of liquor vends in Delhi until the pandemic was under control.

