

New rules allow home delivery of liquor in city

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NEW DELHI: The Delhi government on Monday allowed home delivery of liquor in the Capital through websites and apps as part of a new excise policy that aims to introduce sweeping changes in the city's liquor business, clean up malpractices, and improve user experience.

Under the Delhi Excise (Amendment) Rules, 2021, which was notified on Monday, the government allowed retailers who hold L-13 licence to deliver alcohol to consumers' homes. At present, all liquor shops in Delhi are shut due to the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown.

"Only a particular kind of license holder will be allowed to home deliver liquor. In Delhi, we have allowed home delivery of liquor only to L-13 license holders," said an excise department official, who did not want to be named.

A second government official clarified the rules might not be implemented immediately, but the changes would clear the decks for the process to begin.

"This notification was meant to notify the changes made to the Delhi excise rules. The date of implementation of these rules, including the home delivery service, will be announced through another notification by the Delhi government. That date is yet to be decided," the second official said.

The excise department official said the L-13 category existed before but was little used due to complex rules that allow home delivery only for orders placed by fax or email. "Such modes of placing orders are outdated now and hence, home delivery of liquor never took off in the national Capital," the official said.

"L-13 is an existing license which has been amended. No license for L-13 or home delivery of license has been issued so far," said a Delhi government statement.

The new excise rules allow L-13 licence holders to deliver



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Indian and foreign-made liquor to residences only.

"The licensee shall make delivery of liquor at the residences only if the order is received through a mobile app or online web portal and no delivery shall be made to any hostel, office, and institution," read the notification issued by the state finance department.

Home delivery of liquor is allowed in other prominent cities, including Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata.

The move was welcomed by young people and liquor associations but opposed by some residents and trade associations and political parties.

The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) called it a progressive step.

"Mumbai and Kolkata are two good examples that show that the mechanism of home delivery of liquor can work without any adverse fallouts. Growth of sales in Maharashtra shows such prompt measures helped the state recover some loss in sales forced by Covid lockdowns," said

Vinod Giri, director general, CIABC.

Ankita Kumar, a 31-year-old banker, said Delhi's government should expedite home delivery of liquor. "It is such a relief to hear that people, especially women, will soon have the option to order alcohol at home. I am sure the liquor purchasing experience of 95% of women in the city has been unpleasant at some point or the other," she said.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said the timing of the notification was questionable. "This move of the Delhi government is purported to be taken with a view to earn revenue. Even by allowing shops and markets to open from May 31, the government could have fetched substantial revenue by sale proceeds which would have been made by the traders on the one hand and providing opportunities to earn a livelihood on the other," said Praveen Khandelwal, CAIT secretary general.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) criticised the move and said the notification suggested

"misplaced priorities" of the Aam Aadmi Party government. "At a time when Delhi was reeling under the brutal second wave of Covid-19 during the last two months, the Delhi government was busy working with the liquor mafia to change these rules," said Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta.

Last week, HT reported that lieutenant governor Anil Baijal cleared the Delhi Excise Policy, 2021, and the Delhi Excise (Amendment) Rules, 2021, paving the way for a raft of changes to boost revenue and crack down on liquor mafia. These changes were approved by the Delhi cabinet.

Major changes include slashing the legal drinking age from 25 to 21, getting the state out of the retail alcohol business, overhauling a labyrinthine tax system, reducing the number of dry days in a year from 21 to 3, and improving spread and service. It gets rid of the iron grilles at the front of most liquor vends in the Capital, and allows buyers to browse and purchase the brands of their choice.