

Premium liquor brands in short supply, Delhiites look elsewhere

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New Delhi: A shortage of liquor is being reported from different parts of the national capital with less than a week to go for a significant transition in the excise regime in the city. With private liquor vends closed and government vends set to remain open until November 16, Delhiites are forced to visit neighbouring Gurgaon and Noida to buy premium and even sought-after cheaper brands.

Even though demand peaks during the festive season, the supply of brands in demand has gone down.

As part of Delhi government's new excise policy, which aims to reform excise rules to increase revenue and provide consumers a much better user experience while buying liquor, the city has been divided into 32 zones and licenses have been allotted on a zonal basis.

The transition from the old system to the new saw the private vends closed down from October 1 and only the go-

vernment vends will remain open till November 17. Sources said that at present, the available stock is being cleared and the vends have not been restocked, leading to the shortage.

"There is a shortage of not only premium brands but any brand that sells," said Vinod Giri, director general of the

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Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies. "The number of shops is anyway reduced, and the government shops don't have clarity about what would happen to the stock that remains with them when they shut down," he said.

Giri said that due to the uncertainty over leftover stock, shops had placed

conservative orders less than the usual demand. "This is the peak demand time because of the season and they are out of any stock now," he said, claiming that the scheduling by the excise department has not been appropriately planned with orders taken only till November 3.

Giri said that even from November 17, when the new licensees take over, the supply situation may not improve immediately. "In many cases, prices have not been fixed and the supply chain will not kick in immediately. The shortage will not remain only till November 16 but might extend a little. The switch over has not been as smooth as envisaged," he said.

"We are committed to starting the new system from November 17 and we are working at a war footing so that things are much better from next week," said a Delhi government official. "In any transition, there are some teething troubles, but in the long run, it would be an entirely different kind of consumer experience for Delhiites," he said.