

# Liquor traders seek changes in new Excise Policy in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the Delhi Government formulating a new excise policy to run retail and wholesale liquor trade in the city in 2023-24, liquor traders have sought removal of rules that discriminate against Indian-made products and promote imports in the forthcoming excise policy for 2023-24. They also suggested "vocal for local" for liquor trade in the national capital.

The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has written to the Delhi Government suggesting measures for incorporation in the forthcoming excise policy for the next financial year, the representative body of the Indian alcoholic beverage manufacturers, in its detailed submission to the Delhi Government, has urged improvement in ease of doing business rules, rationalisation of wholesale operations, simplification of new product launch process, and digitization of all operational processes.

Flagging the issue of discrimination against Indian made products and promote imports, the CIABC has stated: "These are regulatory anomalies from the past when India was perceived to be a low-quality producer. For example, the license fee for an imported whisky is Rs 50,000 per year, but if same product is made in India, it will become minimum Rs 25 lakhs.

Today when India is producing world class malt whiskies and craft gin such rules stick out as simply bizarre. The new excise policy that came in to being in November 2021 had addressed these issues but with its withdrawal in toto, the matter is back on table. We hope that Government offers at least parity, if not a preferential treatment, for India made products." CIABC has also said

that underpinning theme behind these recommendations is to have a modern and progressing excise policy befitting the position of Delhi as a major international city. Suggestions cover steps required to modernize trade, lift customer experience, improve ease of doing business, and increase Government tax revenues.

Commenting on the submissions, Vinod Giri, Director General, CIABC said, "Every year we approach state Governments with suggestions that would make alcohol regulation work for benefit of all stakeholders, i.e., Government, the industry, trade and the consumers. Delhi, being the national capital has its own special needs and we tailor our recommendations to best serve that purpose."

CIABC has recommended opening of world-class private retail shops across city, reopening of trend-setting airport shops, reducing drinking age to 21, and bringing retail timing and number of dry days in sync with neighbouring states. For improving ease of doing business, CIABC has sought rationalization of wholesale operations, simplification of new product launch process, and digitization of remaining operational processes.

CIABC has also raised increase in cost of production of raw material needed for producing alcoholic beverages such as ENA, glass, paper, fuel and sought permission to pass it on to consumers as it is done in case of other industries.

Besides suggestions for upcoming excise policy, CIABC letter also seeks resolution to its long-pending request for permission to sell stocks left over at wholesale due to frequent change in excise policy during 2021-22 and 2022-23, besides clearance of old overdue payments to companies.