

## HOWEVER, OFFICIALS REFUTE THE COMPLAINTS

# Delhi's beer lovers say favourite brands missing, no refrigeration facility at vends

**NEW DELHI:** Summers are approaching and beer lovers are on the lookout for chilled bottles of their favourite brands. But most liquor vends in the city seem to be turning them back empty-handed.

Even as consumers in different parts of the city raised the issues at the vends, officials concerned refuted the complaints about popular brands missing from the shelves but admitted that tenders have been placed by corporations for refrigerators and chillers and they will be available at the shops soon.

Under the current excise regime in Delhi, four undertakings of the Delhi government DSIIDC, DTTDC, DSCSC and DCCWS are engaged in retail liquor sales through more than 550 stores across the city.

No reaction was available from the corporations on the lack of refrigeration facilities at the vends run by them.

A consumer outside a liquor store near the DSIIDC office in



Connaught Place complained about the unavailability of beer brands.

"They are offering brands whose names I am hearing for the first time. None of my two-three favourite ones is available," he said.

Another consumer in Laxmi Nagar complained that the liquor shops were not selling chilled beer. "I used to pick up a couple of bottles and drink them after reaching home. Now, they are selling beer at room temperature," he added.

People running the vends admitted that refrigerators were unavailable and so a majority of consumers, many of them youngsters, were returning empty-handed.

A senior excise department officer said the complaints of brand unavailability are generic and there was no specific complaint of any brand of beer missing at the shops.

He, however, said the corporations have placed tenders and refrigerators will be soon available at the liquor shops.

Liquor industry sources said Delhiites gulped down 1.2 crore cases of beer last year each containing 24 bottles or cans.

Vinod Giri, director general of the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies, said consumers in Delhi drink nearly 15 crore bottles of beer every year. The demand is skewed towards the three months of summer which accounts for nearly six crore bottles, he said.

Giri listed several reasons for the shortage of popular beer brands, including the lack of captive production in Delhi and dependence on suppliers located in other states.

"In summers, when supply is low, those states force the companies to cater first to the local demand to protect their taxes. Also, company margins are low in Delhi and during short availability, the companies tend to direct supplies to the more profitable markets," he said.