

Grin & beer it: Some brands missing, no chilled option either

Atul.Mathur@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The rise in temperature is taking tipplers to the liquor stores but leaving them high and dry with only a few brands of beer available in the city. The unavailability of refrigeration facilities at most government-run shops also disappoint the customers hoping to get “chilled” beer.

Delhi currently has 573 liquor shops under four government corporations — Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC), Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation, Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation and Delhi Consumers’ Cooperative Wholesale Stores (DCCWS). Officials accept that the majority of their shops didn’t have the facilities to cool beer bottles, pints and cans.

According to an estimate, almost 60% of beer is consumed almost immediately after the purchase. “Many customers return when we tell them we can’t give them cooled beer,” said an attendant at a store in central Delhi. “It is definitely affecting our sales.”

As per industry experts, about 15 crore beer bottles are sold in Delhi every year — 60% as 650ml bottles and the rest as pints and cans. The demand is

skewed towards three-four months of summers — from April till July — which account for the sale of nearly six crore or 40% bottles.

Corporation officials said the process had been started to install cooling facilities. “We have floated tenders to invite companies to install chillers at our stores. By the end of this month, we hope to have 50% of our shops to get the facility,” said a DCCWS official.

A DTTDC official added that the size of the shops was also being increased, wherever possible, to ensure that the stores had enough space to keep more brands and enough stocks.

Vinod Giri, director general of Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies, said the biggest reason for the shortage was the absence of captive production in Delhi. “In summer, when the supply is low, states force companies to cater first to local demand to protect their taxes. Since the margins are low in Delhi, the companies, too, prefer more profitable markets,” said Giri.

Corporation officials, however, said except for one or two brands, enough beer stocks were available in the city and they hadn’t received any complaint of shortage.