

# More than 1,000 liquor brands registered in capital: Official

Atul.Mathur@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** In March this year, on a petition by liquor distribution firm Pernod Ricard on being refused a licence to distribute brands in its portfolio in the city, Delhi high court had asked Delhi government's excise department to give a written order on the company's application. A senior excise department official said the order has now been issued.

Pernod Ricard India has said it will challenge the order. "Pernod Ricard India has been pursuing its licence to operate in Delhi since the re-implementation of the former excise policy. It will continue to do so and will challenge through due process the recent decision by the excise authorities to deny Pernod Ricard India this operating licence, as it is keen to restart supplies as soon as possible," the French spirits major said in a statement Tuesday. "Pernod Ricard's business in India is a strong success story in spite of this situation in New Delhi city, as evidenced by the recent business results," it added.

According to sources in the excise department, the two other companies had also sought redressal at different forums after the government decided in September 2022 not to issue them licences. Indospirit and Brindco could not be reached for a comment.

Delhi government had scrapped the contentious Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22 in August last year after an FIR was registered regarding its formulation and implementation. Fifteen people, including former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, senior government and excise department officers as well as liquor traders, were named as accused. The excise department reverted to the old policy on September 1 and handed over the retail business to government corporations.

A senior excise officer said more than 1,000 brands had been registered by the department and some old brands had given way to new ones in the market. Last month, the old policy was extended for another six months – till September 30, 2023.

Vinod Giri, director general, Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies, said while the spirit market in Delhi was growing at nearly 30%, there were some disruptions. "Many premium products are not on shelves due to various reasons, forcing consumers to either downtrade or source unlaw-

## FRENCH SPIRITS MAJOR SAYS

**Pernod Ricard India has been pursuing its licence to operate in Delhi since the re-implementation of the former excise policy. It will continue to do so and will challenge through due process the recent decision by the excise authorities to deny Pernod Ricard India this operating licence**

fully from neighbouring states," he said.

"Frequent short-term policy extensions make suppliers reluctant. Companies don't wish to fill up supply pipelines and get stuck with unsold stock when policy changes, as has happened on the last two occasions. The government is losing on revenues, companies on profitable business and consumers on product choice," Giri added. Despite a turmoil and a flip-flop with the policy, the excise department collected Rs 6,821 crore (Rs 5,549 crore as excise and Rs 1,272 crore as value-added tax) in FY 2022-23, compared with Rs 6,762 crore in FY 2021-22, including Rs 5,487 crore in excise duty and Rs 1,275 crore as VAT.