

Whisky sales: Indian liquor cos seek end of discrimination in UK

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New Delhi: Scotch and British gin makers may have been successful in gaining lower duty access to the Indian market, but domestic players are miffed and allege discrimination against Indian brands when they ship their products to the UK.

"The UK and even the European Union do not allow fair imports of most Indian-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) products due to non-tariff barriers related to maturation and ingredients. We only wish that the Indian govt had stood firm on the issue of non-tariff barriers," said Anant S Iyer, di-

DUTY DILUTION

➤ Scotch, other whiskies to attract 75% duty once CETA is implemented

➤ Levy to drop to 40% on Jan 1 of 10th year



➤ The same duty structure to apply to gin

➤ Wines excluded to attract 150% duty

rector general of Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) told **TOI** here.

Norms in the UK allow a product to be classified as whisky if it has been matured for at least three years, the same yardstick that the UK applies for brands produced and sold in their country.

Iyer, however, described it as unfair, arguing that in cold weather it takes time to

mature. "In India, the maturation is much faster. A longer maturity period, say, three years, means that around one-third of our spirit will evaporate due to the hotter climate which will not only result in losses but also impact the quality of the product."

He said that the rules force Indian companies to classify their whisky as 'Indian spirits', effectively keeping them off bounds in the

UK market. "We would like to label our products as Indian Whisky or Indian Rum/Brandy and sell the same in the UK/EU and allow the market and consumer to decide."

CIABC is petitioning that govt takes up "the issue of discrimination" with the UK govt to ensure that Indian brands, which fiercely compete with the western products here, are allowed the same opportunity abroad.

The lobby group has also suggested a minimum import price (MIP) on Bottled-in-Origin (BIO) products coming in from Scotland to ensure that the Scotch whiskies are not imported to India at lower rates.