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Liquor companies seek nod for online, on-call sale

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NEW DELHI: There may be good news for tipplers. Liquor companies have petitioned the central and state governments to allow online sale as well as oncall purchase of alcohol, with lockdown hitting business hard and denying individuals the freedom of purchase. The demand for sale has been made for regions and areas that are out of Covid-19 hotbeds and are safe as far as movement of goods and people are concerned.

"Home deliveries should be allowed, especially as it will also help in maintaining social distancing and avoiding crowding at retail shops," International Spirits & Wines Association of India (ISWAI) and Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) have petitioned in separate representations.

They represent companies such as Diageo, Pernod Ricard, Allied Blenders & Distillers, Brown-Forman, Bacardi, Mohan Meakin and Radico Khaitan. "Customers may place order online or over phone, along with an ID proof establishing age," the associations said, adding that home deliveries should be permitted, subject to necessary checks and diligence.

"The shops should be asked to enrol for home delivery through online applications, and the governments may charge a fee for this exceptional facility that they would allow at this time," Vinod Giri, director-general of CIABC, told TOI.

The associations have said that each qualifying shop should be given three-to-four movement passes for the personnel engaged in home delivery. In their defence, the associations argue that revenues from alcohol form a substantial portion of the earnings of states and thus it would help the various governments get cash to spend on social-sector requirements such as providing food, shelter and medicines to the poor and the needy.

“According to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, food and alcohol are essential commodities and thus access should be given to the liquor companies as well, at least in the safe zones,” Amrit Kiran Singh, chairman of ISWAI, said.