

# UP excise policy for blend of booze in shops

## Govt Pushes To Nip Illicit Trade Of Liquor In UP

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**Lucknow:** The much-awaited excise policy for the 2025-26 financial year was announced by the state government on Thursday.

Beginning April 1, the structure of the retail liquor trade would change in a complete manner and instead of standalone shops that provide IMFL, beer and country liquor, composite shops in two categories—for country liquor and beer & and for IMFL and beer—would come up. TOI had reported on Jan 24 that UP is contemplating introducing composite shops on the lines of Madhya Pradesh and Rajast-

### WHAT'S SET TO CHANGE

- ▶ **Model shops** would continue to operate **April 1 onwards**
- ▶ **Standalone IMFL and beer shops** will be discontinued. Instead one composite shop selling both would come into existence. **No canteen would operate in composite shops**
- ▶ **Desi and IMFL** will not be allowed to be sold from the **same shop**
- ▶ **Desi liquor** could be traded through **standalone shops** (as rural areas have limited demand for **beer & IMFL**)
- ▶ **Desi licence** owners could upgrade it and also add a counter to sell beer (targeted



for urban pockets but could be anywhere in the state if person is willing to pay additional licence fees)

- ▶ **Fees of occasional bar licences** also divided in multiple categories to derive increased amount during commercial events

han. All the liquor vends in the state would come up through e-lottery draw, a scenario which would open doors

for new entrepreneurs to enter the liquor business. The last draw of lots to allocate liquor shops in the state had

taken place in 2018. Though the cost of country liquor and wine could go up, that of IMFL, beer as well as premium stock that is imported to the country shall largely remain unchanged.

State excise minister (independent) Nitin Agarwal said that the new framework is going to benefit the end consumers, bring in more revenues for the state coffers and would discourage illicit trade.

Meanwhile, in the coming weeks tipplers and liquor patrons could find it difficult to get their hands on the preferred brands as existing retailers are going to focus on disposing of the existing stock. Presently, 29,102 liquor vends cater to the customers out of which 55% served consumers of the country liquor.

Excise commissioner Adarsh Singh said that the

numbers of IMFL and beer vends would go up and so would the number of restaurants that serve alcohol.

"In Lucknow, Ghaziabad, Agra and Noida, restaurant owners have been given the option to provide low alcoholic beverages and wine on the premises. They will have to pay Rs 4 lakh instead of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh that is taken from regular bar or pub owners in the four cities which provide all kinds of alcoholic beverages," said Singh.

Meanwhile, composite shops would provide both IMFL and beer from the counter.

Standalone country liquor shops would continue to operate as in smaller towns and rural belts opening a composite shop would not be feasible. The scope of the policy though has been broadened to allow country liquor

shop owners to upgrade it further and turn it into a composite one. "However, only country liquor and beer would be available in such shops," added Singh.

Industry stakeholders also welcomed the decision of the govt to introduce composite shops.

Managing director of Bareilly-based Superior Industries Limited, Manish Agarwal, which owns several country liquor and IMFL brands said, "A lot of positive decisions have been taken by the state. Introducing composite licence would improve the retail trade for all categories. Plus, more variety has been added for country liquor patrons by introducing a new category. Making aseptic packaging (tetra pack) mandatory for all categories of country liquor has been also done in the interest of end-consumers."