

Excise policy extended till Sept 30

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NEW DELHI: The Delhi government has approved the extension of the state excise policy, which expires on March 31, for six months till September 30, to ensure the continuity of liquor supply in the Capital, officials aware of the development said on Wednesday.

The existing policy (2020-21) has been extended as a new liquor policy is yet to be framed, officials said, attributing the delay to the ongoing probe into alleged irregularities in the now-scrapped 2021-22 excise regime, and the subsequent arrest of former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia.

On Wednesday, a Delhi government official said that chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has approved the extension of the excise policy 2020-21 for six months. The official said that, at present, five festivals have been declared dry days in Delhi — Mahavir Jayanti (April 4), Good Friday (April 7), Eid-ul Fitr (April 22), Buddha Purnima (May 5), and Eid-ul-Zuha (June 29) — and other such dates will be declared

Excise policy timeline

- 2021**
 - Nov 17:** AAP government implements new licence-based excise policy 2021-22 in Capital
- 2022**
 - July 22:** LG recommends CBI probe into policy
 - July 28:** Govt announces it will scrap new policy from Sept 1
 - Sept 1:** Govt reverts to old excise policy 2020-21 for six months
- 2023**
 - Sept 27:** CBI arrests AAP communication in-charge Vijay Nair
 - Sept 28:** CBI arrests liquor trader Sameer Mahendru
 - Feb 14:** Excise policy 2020-21 extended till March 31
 - Feb 26:** CBI arrests then deputy CM Manish Sisodia
 - Mar 6:** ED arrests Sisodia
 - Mar 15:** Govt approves extension of 2020-21 excise policy till Sept 30



at a later time.

“In addition to the extension of the existing policy, the government has directed the excise

department to formulate a new excise policy at the earliest,” the government said in a statement.

An excise official said the

department will soon issue a formal order declaring the extension of the policy. “All the licensees who want to continue their businesses will be required to deposit a fee to the excise department to get their licences extended. It will ensure there is no disruption in the supply of liquor. The policy was extended in March as well, and most of the licensees deposited proportionate fees and got their licences extended with the same terms and conditions,” said the official.

The 2021-22 excise policy, which was introduced on November 17, 2021, aimed to revitalise the city’s flagging liquor business, but was scrapped and replaced with the old regime on September 1, 2022 after lieutenant governor VK Saxena recommended a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into alleged irregularities in that policy.

Excise officials were then asked to prepare a new liquor policy by September 2022. However, the new rules are yet to be framed, officials said. They said they are treading a fine line trying to ensure that the liquor business is revitalised but at the

same time, they do not fall foul of the law.

On Tuesday, HT reported that the excise department had submitted a report to the Delhi government recommending the extension of the existing policy.

Industry experts, meanwhile, said the excise regime should not be shadowed by uncertainty. Vinod Giri, director general of the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC), said, “The industry can progress only when they function in a stable policy environment. The stability helps in proper business planning. Short-term extensions ensure continuity, but uncertainty is set to hit investment and employment opportunities in the industry.”

Naresh Goyal, president of Delhi Liquor Trade Association — a union of private traders who operated 260 stores under the 2020-21 regime, but were forced to shut shop after the 2021-22 regime — said Delhi needs a progressive policy. “Private players are not allowed to get licences, and all stores are run by the government. It leaves our business at a disadvantage compared to neighbouring cities,” he said.