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Special panels to be set up for disposal of liquor seized by Customs

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New Delhi, Sep 16 The revenue department has worked out a new framework for expeditious disposal of seized foreign liquor lying with Customs formations, including defence establishments, in absence of response from bidders.

The seized/confiscated alcohol will now be disposed by liquor disposal committees at various Customs locations.

Under the extant guidelines, seized or confiscated liquor is disposed by various means including sales to Canteen Stores Department (CSD), other defence establishments, Indian Tourism Development Corporation, or hotels.

In a circular, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said it has been brought to its notice that Customs field formations are facing difficulties in disposing of seized foreign origin liquor due to lack of response from CSD or from other defence establishments.

Also there is lack of response from other bidders on account of problems associated with getting clearance from state excise department and food safety and standards authority of India (FSSAI), it said in the circular.

At present, CSD is buying liquor of foreign brands directly in bulk quantity.

As the seized/confiscated liquor is in assorted brands and in different quantities, CSD is not in a position to buy the stock from Customs, CBIC noted.

FSSAI has also categorically emphasised that without obtaining a no objection certificate (NOC) from it, imported liquor should not be released for the market for sale or consumption, and if sampling is not feasible in case of seized lot, then such stock should be destroyed by the Customs.

In view of the difficulties faced by the authorities, the CBIC has decided that the Principal Commissioner of Customs or Commissioner of Customs should constitute 'liquor disposal committee'.

The committee would order disposal of seized/confiscated liquor and also advise the respective investigation section/agency on the steps to be initiated for expeditious disposal of confiscated liquor.

On modes of disposal, CBIC said the stock of liquor for which NOCs from FSSAI are obtained should be disposed of through e-auction.

In case it is not possible to obtain NoC from FSSAI, the stock should be destroyed, CBIC added.