Liquor bottles may soon carry pictorial warnings – FSSAI mulling over move

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FSSAI is in the process of finalising standards for alcoholic beverage and is studying global practices regarding pictorial warnings and messages around drunk driving, an official said.

New Delhi: Alcohol is a vice – leisure for some and a habit or an addiction for many – but ultimately, it is a health hazard.

While cigarette packs carry warnings in the form of photographs which cautions smokers about its cancer-causing tendencies, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is contemplating doing the same with liquor bottles.

With an aim to warn people against ill effects of alcohol and drunk driving, FSSAI is in the process of finalising standards for alcoholic beverage and is studying global practices regarding pictorial warnings and messages around drunk driving, an official said.

"We are examining international practices regarding pictorial warnings and messages around drunk driving and alcohol consumption. After this we will finalise our recommendations for inclusion of such warnings in regulations for alcoholic beverages that are being finalised," the FSSAI official, who did not wish to be named, said.
NGO Community Against Drunken Driving (CADD) had filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in Delhi High Court seeking pictorial warning on drunk driving on all alcohol bottles, Indian or Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL).

The court, which heard the plea on May 18, refused to give a direction to increase the size of statutory warning on liquor bottles and packaging, saying it was in the realm of policy making.

However, it had directed the FSSAI, under the ministry of health, to consider the plea as a suggestion and take a firm view in this regard.

"I have met officials at FSSAI and given them four designs along with messages to be used as part of the bottle label. Pictorial warnings are critical as they are understood, easily without any language barrier and also comprehensible by persons who cannot read or write," said Prince Singhal, activist and founder of CADD.

He said pictorial messages will serve as an alert or reminder to road users about the hazards of drunk driving and help in reducing the risk of road accidents tragedies.

India loses over 1,46,000 lives every year out of which 1,00,000 are due to drunk driving, Singhal claimed, adding drunk driving is also responsible for over 72 per cent of fatal road accidents.