There will be no sale of liquor in Karnataka, which has been suspended since the nationwide lockdown was imposed in view of curbing the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) disease.

An order issued by the state Excise Department on Wednesday banned sale till midnight of April 20. An earlier order had said the sale was prohibited till April 14.

The Excise Department order mentioned that distilleries which were manufacturing sanitisers can continue to operate without any hindrance but no consumable alcohol can be prepared. It also warned that licences will be suspended if shop owners disobey the order passed by the department.

Deccan Herald quoted Excise Minister H Nagesh as saying that the department cannot propose the sale of alcohol given that the Prime Minister himself has asked the country to follow the lockdown rules strictly. He also said that since it’s difficult to control crowds at liquor vends, there was no possibility of relaxing the prohibition prior to April 20.

Incidentally, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa had suggested relaxing the lockdown norms starting from April 15 after consulting an expert panel earlier.

This had led to speculation that the sale would resume in private retail shops and government operated MSIL (Mysore Sales International Limited) shops starting from Wednesday. Even the liquor vendor associations had written to the state government to allow them to run for a few hours daily or allow introduction of home delivery options to prevent crowding.

However, in a televised address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call to extend the nationwide lockdown till May 3 seems to have prompted the decision.

Welcoming the decision, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa also appealed to the people to voluntarily cooperate with the government to contain the spread of COVID-19 virus.

"I welcome the Prime Minister’s decision to extend the lockdown till May 3. Our government will strictly implement the Centre’s guidelines which will be issued tomorrow. I appeal to the people of Karnataka to voluntarily cooperate with us to contain this disease," he said.

The lockdown, he told reporters, would be followed more strictly till April 20 as the Prime Minister has said, and the situation would be closely monitored.
"If there are any violations during the lockdown, measures will be tightened, especially in hotspots.

(With PTI Inputs)