

Lok Satta demands action against liquor scam accused

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The Lok Satta Party today demanded that Excise Minister Mopidevi Venkata Ramana, facing charges of accepting a bribe from a liquor syndicate, resign immediately accepting moral responsibility and face the ACB inquiry. It also wanted the Government to suspend all officials figuring in the ACB report as bribe takers. Similarly, media managements should act against their employees found guilty in the liquor scandal. Legislators facing charges should cooperate with the inquiry without distracting it.

The Lok Satta Party spelt out its stand on the liquor scam unearthed by the Anti Corruption Bureau at a media conference. Mr. D. V. V. S. Varma, Lok Satta Party Working President, and party leaders Katari Srinivasa Rao, P. Ravi Maruth, K. Gita Murthy, and M. Mahalakshmi addressed the media.

The ACB raids have revealed, said the Lok Satta leaders, that all 'sampradaya rajakiya' (sara) (traditional political) parties including the Congress and the Telugu Desam have been guilty of turning Andhra Pradesh into a 'Madyandhrapradesh' by being partners in liquor trade and in forming liquor syndicates despite their protestations against the liquor menace. Although the players in the liquor trade belong to different parties, they are hand in glove with each other. The traditional political parties have been fielding liquor traders as their candidates in elections.

The Lok Satta leaders demanded that Left parties, which call for curbs on liquor consumption, should explain how they could accept donations from liquor syndicates which have been fleecing people by opening illegal outlets and selling liquor above the maximum retail price. Political parties which have colluded with liquor syndicates should openly apologize to the public.

The Lok Satta leaders said the Government has spawned and nurtured corruption by auctioning liquor outlets to highest bidders. The licensees in turn promoted belt shops and sold liquor over and above the maximum retail price. They demanded that the Government take over retail liquor trade, limit the number of shops and sales timings, make the ACB autonomous and bring it under the Lokayukta purview,

In reply to a question, Mr. Varma asserted that the party would expel anyone found guilty of accepting donations from the liquor lobby.