

## Govt. scuttling liquor probe: Lok Satta

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The Lok Satta Party today charged the Government with deliberate attempts to scuttle the ongoing ACB (Anti Corruption Bureau) inquiry into the liquor mafia.

In a media statement, Lok Satta Party General Secretary Katari Srinivasa Rao and Secretary P. Bhaskara Rao said the Government has betrayed its intention by its midnight transfer of Mr. Kothakota Srinivasa Reddy, Additional ACB Director heading the special investigation team (SIT) probing the liquor mafia.

It may be recalled that ACB raids on liquor syndicates in a number of districts have revealed that the operators have been funneling huge amounts as bribes to politicians including legislators and Ministers, officials and media to cover up their illegal trade practices.

The Lok Satta leaders pointed out that the sudden transfer of the SIT chief comes in the wake of a cold war between Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy and PCC President Botsa Satyanarayana.

Media reports quoting ACB sources said that half the liquor licenses in Vizianagaram district, the home district of the PCC President, had been cornered by white card holders. Since they could not have raised the huge amounts of money needed to bag licenses, they are apparently benamis for certain powerful sections in society.

It is against this backdrop that Mr. Botsa Satyanarayana has reportedly accused the Chief Minister of trying to tarnish his reputation by linking his name to the liquor mafia.

Mr. Srinivasa Rao and Mr. Bhaskara Rao wondered whether the Chief Minister was trying to buy peace with the PCC President by throwing a spanner in the liquor probe.

The Lok Satta leaders recalled that the Lok Satta has all along been demanding that the Anti Corruption Bureau be made autonomous and freed from day-to-day Government control and placed under the purview of an independent and powerful Lokayukta.