

Cong divided over liquor ban in Bihar

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The Bihar unit of the Congress is a divided house on the liquor prohibition issue. While Congress legislature party leader Ajit Kumar Sharma asked Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to withdraw the prohibition, his party colleague and MLA from Katihar Shakil Ahmad Khan demanded strict enforcement of the anti-liquor laws.

Sharma, in a letter to Nitish Kumar on Tuesday, suggested total lifting of prohibition, raising prices of liquor and utilising the revenue earned through excise for setting up of industries.

Sharma said the government was suffering heavy

loss of revenue since imposition of prohibition in 2015, but liquor was available in black all over the state, and the government is suffering



more loss due to black marketing of liquor coming from other parts of the country illegally.

The Congress leader said the liquor mafia benefited due to the ban and promoted clandestine

business of liquor.

He demanded the state government to lift prohibition immediately.

However, Khan opposed his party leader and said the CLP leader should withdraw his letter. Khan said the chief minister should go stern on the prohibition laws and ensure its provisions were enforced strictly.

Former chief minister, Jeetan Ram Manjhi, who heads the HAM(S), an alliance partner of NDA in Bihar, also supported relaxation in prohibition laws. He demanded release of all those arrested for violation of prohibition laws. Manjhi said the majority of those detained or jailed on the charge of violating prohibition laws were poor and Dalits.