

State-run corporation can monitor liquor trade in Bihar: CIABC

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The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has urged the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in Bihar to end prohibition in the state.

It has also suggested several steps to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to ensure that his avowed goals of helping women is achieved without adverse fall-outs of prohibition.

In its letter to the leaders of the NDA constituents, Janata Dal (United), Bharatiya Janata Party, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) & Vikassheel Insaan Party, the CIABC has pointed out that Bihar is paying a heavy price of the prohibition policy in the form of proliferation of unlawful and spurious liquor, hooch tragedies, rise of crime syndicates and loss of legitimate Government revenues.

The state's development has been affected as it is losing out on revenue from the legitimate

liquor trade which is pegged at around Rs 10,000 crore per annum.

The letter comes in the wake of the recent hooch tragedies which claimed over 40 lives in four districts. Since the Nitish Kumar government imposed a ban on liquor in the state in April 2016, around 150 people have lost their lives in various hooch tragedies. Kumar has called a high-level meeting on November 16 over the liquor ban in the state. The Confederation has urged Kumar to end prohibition in a manner that the government is able to get revenues for the state's development without compromising on the desired goals of the prohibition policy. It has asked Kumar to direct liquor factories to hire 50 per cent of their workforce as women which will lead to economic self-reliance and empowerment. It has also proposed a special cess on sale of liquor to fund alcohol de-addiction and rehabilitation centres. It has suggested penal

compounding of existing liquor-related cases in order to cut down the massive backlog as well as to help the state earn additional revenues to the tune of Rs 1,000 crore.

The CIABC has also suggested a state-run wholesaling Corporation for close monitoring and control on the liquor trade in the state.

According to CIABC Director General Vinod Giri, "Prohibition has led to creation of liquor mafia. It has also caused major damage to the state's economy and potential investments, thus hitting job creation. Revenue from liquor sales used to be a major source of revenue for the state exchequer. Bihar is missing out on an annual revenue of around Rs 10,000 crore, forcing the state towards debt crisis."

Giri noted that a recent National Family Health Survey 2019-20 report had clearly stated that Bihar consumes more liquor than Maharashtra, which proves that prohibition has not worked.