

# Gang selling low-quality booze in foreign brand bottles busted

The gang is believed to have cheated at least 500 people by selling spurious liquor in the guise of popular foreign brands at a discount of 15-30 per cent

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Used bottles, labels, sealed-caps produced by Prohibition and Excise department personnel at a press conference in Hyderabad on Saturday | Express photo

**HYDERABAD:** A gang of three people who were preparing spurious foreign liquor bottles and selling them at a discount of 15 to 30 per cent in Hyderabad limits were caught by Telangana Prohibition and Excise department's State Task Force (STF) on Saturday. Sleuths of the department seized 325 fake foreign bottles containing low-costing liquor from godowns at Somajiguda and Ameerpet.

Bottles of the popular foreign brand including The Glenlivet, Glenfiddich, Royal Salute, Johnnie Walker Blue Label, Chivas Regal, Belvedere and other brands, which cost between Rs 7,000 and Rs 35,000 a bottle, were filled with alcohol which costs Rs 300 to Rs 1,800. Modus-operandi of the gang is similar to the adage 'Old wine in new bottle' as they used to pour low-cost liquor into facsimile foreign liquor bottles and pass it off as original ones. It was sold to people living in Banjara Hills, Madhapur, Lakdikapul and at places where social events were organised.

One of the accused used to procure used bottles, fake labels, fake sealed-caps from Mumbai.

After the consignment reached Hyderabad, they would use liquor from Royal Stag, Imperial Blue, 100-Pipers, White Mischief vodka and other brands, to pour into empty used foreign liquor bottles, cap them with fake sealed-caps and sell them to their customers. At a press conference on Saturday here, commissioner of Prohibition and Excise department RV Chandravan said that orders for the liquor bottles was placed over phone and the spurious liquor was supplied at price 20 to 30 per cent lower than the original. One of the accused Mahesh Ambavi, a native of Gujarat and resident of Ameerpet, who was produced at the press conference, demonstrated how they used to prepare spurious liquor bottles.

He took an empty bottle, poured alcohol from low-costing bottle, capped it and stuck a sticker seal. Besides Mahesh, the STF team also caught B Sharath and Srinivas. One more accused Harish Singh is at large. The bottles, labels, sealed-caps were sent through travel services by Mukesh, Suresh and another person sent the fake products from Mumbai. Mahesh used to procure it from Mumbai and pass the bottles to the other three accused. Sharath owns a hotel, and Srinivas used to work as rental home broker.

The gang is expected to have lured at least 500 people by selling low-cost liquor in the guise of costly foreign ones. They sold it to individuals and to those who organised private parties. The gang was into the business for at least a year. Officials said that two ways one would identify they were consuming spurious liquor from foreign bottles is by close examination of the labels stuck on bottles. The discount on foreign liquor bottles price was one of the glaring feature that caught the attention of Excise department's STF personnel. Earlier raids and seizures of the department helped them in gaining inputs about the gang. "Who would sell original liquor bottles at a price lesser than the price at duty-free shops at airports? This was one of the signs which caught our attention," sources said.

Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/hyderabad/2017/oct/08/gang-selling-low-quality-booze-in-foreign-brand-bottles-busted-1668556.html>