

Illicit liquor racket busted, three arrested



STAFF REPORTER

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500 litres of illicit brew seized from Kollam, former excise officer among those arrested

Excise sleuths on Wednesday arrested three persons, including a former excise officer, on the charge of running an illicit liquor racket and seized 500 litres from their possession.

The arrested have been identified as Harish John (51), a resident of Kayamkulam, Rahul (27), of Kallumthazham, and Sanjayan (42), of East Kallada. A team led by Kollam excise special squad circle inspector I. Naushad made the arrests.

The operation was conducted following a tip-off received by Kollam Assistant Excise Commissioner J. Thajudeenkutty that OPR bottles, originally priced at ₹600, are available for ₹1,500 near Ayathil.

Deputy Excise Commissioner Jacob John instructed the special squad to conduct inspections and Rahul and Sanjay were caught with 28 litres of the illicit liquor. On questioning, it was revealed that the trio had been operating a manufacturing unit at Kareelakulangara in Kayamkulam.

Mixing flavours

In the raid conducted on a multistoreyed building rented by Harish John, the team found 480 litres of illicit liquor made by mixing different flavours in spirit. They seized 5,320 empty bottles, high-tech sealing machine used for sealing bottles, 50 empty containers used to store spirit and accessories for blending spirit.

The unit had fake labels of brands, including OPR, Jawan and Daddy Wilson, along with 7,210 fake holographic stickers of the Kerala State Beverages Corporation. Harish John, who was dismissed from the Excise Department for his connection with the illicit liquor lobby, said he had been running the unit for over a year procuring spirit from a smuggler in Palakkad. The flavours are from Goa and the labels are all printed in Sivakasi, he said. Excise inspector Rajeev, grade assistant excise inspector Santhosh and civil excise officers Sarath, Manu K. Mani, Sreentha, Rajagopal Chettiyar and Vishnu were part of the team that made the arrest.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/illicit-liquor-racket-busted-three-arrested/article31231206.ece>