

Kochi: Cops seize 8,500 litres of spirit in multiple raids

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The spirit seized from a godown at Ashokapuram in Aluva on Thursday

KOCHI: In multiple raids conducted across the district on Wednesday night and Thursday early morning, Ernakulam rural police seized around 8,500 litres of spirit illegally smuggled into the district from Goa, to be sold as illicit liquor.

According to sources, police seized the chemical from Chottanikkara and Aluva.

Police suspect that a racket

was behind the supply of the chemical in rural areas. The chemical was brought to the state in the guise of medicines and it was stored as sanitizers. Police seized fake labels from the accused as well.

“Our initial investigation shows that the gang was based in Aluva. They used to dilute the spirit, add flavour and colour and then sell it off as liquor. It was dangerous as it could have led to serious health issues if not for the timely intervention,” said Ernakulam rural SP K Karthick.

It was on Wednesday evening that the police unearthed 2,495 litres of spirit from a house at Chottanikkara based on a tip off received by the rural SP. Two persons, identified as Manoj Kunnath and Abdul Salam, the driver of the vehicle who brought the spirit to the house, were arrested from the spot.

Based on the information received from the accused at Chottanikkara, police conducted raids in towns like Kalady, Perumbavoor and Aluva on Wednesday night.

On Thursday early morning, police raided a godown owned by one Mansoor Ali at Ashokapuram in Aluva and seized as much as 5,883 litres of spirit. The spirit was stored in 1,800 plastic containers, police said. Police said that the accused used fake bills showing that the spirit was meant for making sanitizer.

“We have seized some labels as well. They used to print labels and paste it on the containers to claim that it was sanitizer. They did this mainly while transporting. So when the police started tightening surveillance they were forced to transport it to various locations so that all of it wouldn’t be caught at once,” said an officer.

Police said that the man arrested at Chottanikkara has claimed that he was offered Rs 50,000 to store the chemical at the house for two days.

Earlier, police had arrested three persons with 100 litres of spirit at Kalady on Monday. Police had also seized essence used for making illicit liquor from them.

Police had found out that the accused used to sell the illicit liquor as Indian made foreign liquor, mostly as brandy, after pasting fake labels on the bottles. They used to sell the illicit liquor for Rs 3,500 per litre, police said.

Police said that all three seizures, as per their preliminary investigation, are connected.

“It seems like the spirit seized at Chottanikkara and Kalady were sourced from Aluva. Some of the key accused have gone into hiding. We will get a better picture about the racket once these accused are arrested,” said a senior officer, adding that more seizures are likely to happen in the coming days.

Police have registered separate cases in Aluva, Kalady and Chottanikkara and a special investigation team was formed to probe them. Ernakulam rural additional SP, MJ Sojan is heading the SIT.

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