

## Pune Excise Department Intercepts Major Illegal Liquor Shipment



In a significant operation on Friday, July 18, 2025, the Pune State Excise Department seized over 100 boxes of Goa-manufactured liquor, valued at approximately ₹31.56 lakh (approximately \$37,800 USD), at the Patas Toll Naka in Daund taluka. The bust led to the arrest of five individuals involved in the illicit transportation of alcohol into Maharashtra. This crackdown highlights the ongoing challenge posed by interstate liquor smuggling, often driven by price discrepancies and tax evasion.

Acting on a confidential tip-off, excise officials strategically set up a trap near the toll plaza. Their vigilance paid off when they intercepted two suspicious vehicles—a silver four-wheeler and another car. Upon inspection, officers discovered 300 bottles, each 750 ml, of liquor specifically manufactured in Goa, being smuggled without proper permits. The seized alcohol was intended for illegal distribution within the Pune district, violating the state's excise regulations.

During the immediate raid, authorities apprehended Santosh Markad and Vaibhav Tarange. Further interrogation of the arrested individuals led to subsequent raids. Officials then descended upon Markad's residence, where they uncovered an additional 132 liquor bottles and 559 empty bottles, with an estimated value of ₹1.32 lakh. The investigation continued, leading to a hotel in Chandanwadi, where Akash Kodlinge was arrested and liquor worth ₹96,875 was confiscated. In a related action, Kunal Kolhe was arrested in Nandur, with excise officials seizing liquor stock worth ₹68,680 from a hotel there. Beyond the alcohol itself, authorities also found counterfeit labels, packaging, and other materials intended to deceive both consumers and enforcement agencies, bringing the total value of seized items, including vehicles, to an estimated ₹31.5 lakh.

The illegal transportation of liquor from Goa into Maharashtra is a recurring issue, primarily due to the significant difference in excise duties between the two states. This economic disparity makes smuggling a lucrative, albeit illegal, venture. Superintendent Atul Kanade of the Pune Excise Department emphasized the department's commitment, stating, "Acting on the tip-off, we have seized Goa-made liquor stock being illegally transported. In this case, we have arrested individuals, and we are working on forward linkages related to this case." The arrested individuals were subsequently produced in court and remanded to police custody, as investigations continue to trace the broader network behind this smuggling operation, including the source and ultimate destination of the consignment. The Excise Department remains vigilant and encourages public cooperation in reporting illicit liquor activities through their helpline numbers.