

Coimbatore oil wholesaler found using misleading label

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Officers showing a misleading label used by a oil wholesaler in Coimbatore

COIMBATORE: An oil wholesaler and distributor in Annur is suspected of misbranding his product. He was found having packets of a Tirupur-based popular oil brand and having oil tins of another popular brand name. The officers sealed the godown with more than 25,000 litres of oil, worth around Rs 25 lakh, on Thursday night.

On Thursday evening, a group of food safety officers went to a house in Raju Street in Annur to inspect and check an oil distributor. Based on a tip off from food safety officers in Tirupur, who caught a vehicle transporting oil tins, which sported labels reading “Karthik’s Gold” sunflower refined oil as its brand name, the officers found the address and conducted a raid.

In the address they had been given, the officers found an independent house. There was a small godown in the same compound. Heavy drama ensued because the locked godown had to be broken open with police protection.

“We did not find anyone in the house and attempts to reach the owner, Muthukumar, also failed,” said designated food safety officer Dr Vijayalalithambigai. “So we had to call police and request protection to break open the lock and search the godown,” she said. After nearly three hours of waiting, the officers managed to break open the lock around 8pm.

Inside the godown, they found crates of oil packets labelled “Rukki Gold” Refined Palmolein oil stacks of refined sunflower oil tins, sporting popular oil brand name “Gold”. Above the “Gold” was a small bold print reading “Karthik’s”. “Rukki Gold is a brand name owned by Tirupur-based oil manufacturing company Ganapathy Oil Mills and the packaging contains no proper addresses of the place the oil is manufactured or packaged,” said the officer. “ The branding of the tins is also misleading because “Karthik’s” is in a small font above the prominent “Gold” she said.

“This man was printing a label using the Gold brand name, knowing it was already popular and established and hoping customers may just buy it without noticing the difference,” she said. “This is tantamount to ‘misleading the customer,’ under the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India Act of 2006,” she added. The godown owner also did not have a food safety license.

They seized 25,200 litres overall. The owner was allegedly buying oil from suppliers in Chennai and Kangeyam and just labelling it and selling it in Coimbatore.