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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

Alert ID	Publication Date	Reporting Date	Place Name	News Source/Publication Language
5170	25.02.2019	25.02.2019	Golaghat Jorhat Assam	Hindustan Times English Newspaper 25 <sup>th</sup> February, 2019/Page No. 08
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Hooch toll in Assam reaches 143</b>			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to DSU-Golaghat & Jorhat, SSU-Assam			

The death toll from the hooch tragedy in Assam's Golaghat and Jorhat districts climbed to 143 on Sunday, four days after first death due to the drinking of toxic bootleg liquor was reported.

Additional director general of police Mukesh Agarwal confirmed the toll had gone up to 143 and said they have arrested over 20 people in connection with the state's worst hooch tragedy. Police said that at least two more deaths were reported from Halmira Tea Estate in Golaghat and added that 45 workers from there were now among the dead.

Deputy inspector general of police Dilip Kumar De said that they suspected that methanol used in the hooch was the reason behind the deaths. But the exact cause will be known only after tests are done, he added. De said that they were in touch with their counterparts in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to find out about any possible similarities in deaths in these two states.

Over 100 people died after consuming illicit liquor in the two states earlier this month. "As of now there is nothing to suggest that both the incidents are related," De said.

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**Disclaimer:- This is a media alert subject to verification.**

**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,  
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

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एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

Police raided a godown of one Lalchand Agarwal in Golaghat on Sunday and recovered jaggery, alum, and urea, the main ingredients used in making the illicit liquor. "People like him are the main persons behind the illicit liquor trade," said De. Excise department superintendent (Golaghat) Shantanu Hazarika said that the poor quality jaggery meant for cattle feed, is routed for making hooch. "It is impossible to check its sale."

But records furnished by the excise department suggest a lapse on its part.

In December 2018, the department records note arrests of two people from Jugibari village in Golaghat. It is this village, adjacent to Halmira Tea Estate, which would supply hooch to local distributors, according to tea estate workers and the police. The local distributors would mostly buy it in five-liter cans for anything between ~350 to ~450.

Bitul Phukan, a resident of Jugibari, said there were as many as three people in the village, who instead of making hooch from jaggery just mixed spirit with water and sold it openly. "It was happening for many months," he said, pointing to the house of one Babu Phukan who has been arrested after the tragedy.

At least two other sellers from the village are absconding, the police said. "I have been drinking Sulai [hooch] made from jaggery by others. I had it the other day also. But some people were mixing spirits which led to deaths," he said explaining how even one of his cousins who procured Sulai from Babu Phukan's house was among the dead.

Interestingly, while the police note that as many as five suspected distributors of Sulai were among the dead, none of the manufacturers in this "cottage industry", as one of the police officials described it, are among the victims.

"The phenomenon of Sulai consumption is not just restricted to Assam but all of the Northeast," said Parimal Suklabaidya, Assam excise minister. He promised to clamp down on the network of illicit distribution and take action against excise officials after inquiry.

According to a spokesperson for the Assam's excise department, more than seven lakh liters of "illegally distilled liquor" was seized in the state from April 2016 to November 2018.

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