

# Vietnam busts counterfeit liquor ring ahead of lunar new year

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Hanoi- Police in Vietnam have arrested four people with nearly 5,000 bottles of counterfeit whisky and brandy in a move to wipe out fake goods on the market ahead of the traditional Tet lunar new year holiday, an official said Tuesday. Gang leader Tran Thi Bach Linh, 39, was arrested with 3,000 bottles of fake Chivas, Johnnie Walker and Hennessy and police seized equipment from her home in Vinh, capital of central Nghe An province, according to Hoang Anh Linh, an official in the Economic Police Department.

Raids on three other houses in Hanoi and two other northern cities also turned up nearly 2,000 bottles of counterfeit brandy.

The bust was touted as the largest-ever counterfeit liquor ring in Vietnam, according to local newspaper Tuoi Tre. The counterfeiting ring mixed a small percentage of real imported brandy and whisky with domestic whisky, additives and coloring substances and then attached fake labels to the bottles, according to Tien Phong newspaper.

Offering bottles of expensive imported spirits ahead of Tet has become common in Vietnam, which has the second-fastest growing economy in Asia.

"Counterfeit brandy or whisky is very common but we don't know the percentage of fake brandy sold in the market," said an official from the Market Management Department of Hanoi.

He added that smuggled brandy, both fake and genuine, makes up an estimated 60 per cent of the spirits market in the capital.

Vietnam has a 65 per cent import tariff on spirits, leading to smuggled and counterfeit imported goods.

The tax rate will drop to as low as 45 per cent within six years under Vietnam's commitments to the World Trade Organization

