

# Business Standard

## Economic distress due to Covid-19 causes rise in smuggling in NE: FICCI

*Industry body FICCI on Sunday said the recent rise in smuggling in the northeastern region can be attributed to economic distress insinuated by Covid-19 pandemic*

**IANS | Guwahati/Kohima | September 7, 2020**

Industry body FICCI on Sunday said the recent rise in smuggling in the northeastern region can be attributed to economic distress insinuated by Covid-19 pandemic. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) said loss of jobs and lack of income due to recurrent lockdowns have left citizens without a means of livelihood.

"Reports suggest that smugglers and insurgents are using people from the local tribal areas to transport smuggled goods by taking advantage of their financial vulnerability caused due to Covid-19," a FICCI report said.

The FICCI's Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE) highly appreciated the efforts of central para-military force Assam Rifles and praised its Director General along with other officers for their anti-smuggling operations. The FICCI report said : "The Assam Rifles during its recent successful interception, seized illicit cigarettes, smuggled from neighbouring country, worth Rs 14 crore. Enforcement agencies impounded illicit cartons of cigarettes in 26 operations along the Indo-Myanmar border during months of July and August alone."

"Various battalions of the forces intercepted smugglers transporting the illicit consignments using bikes, cars and trucks while hiding them inside rice sacks, jungle tracks, vegetation and others." FICCI CASCADE Chairman Anil Rajput said that illicit cigarette smuggling is a formidable challenge before our nation that has been draining our government exchequer by creating opportunities from tax arbitrage.

"It also threatens local industries and their capacity to create livelihoods. Assam Rifles' proactive vigilance in intercepting the movement of smuggled goods is a definitive step towards putting fear in the hearts of those who deal in such trading. Their commendable effort sets forth an example to be keenly studied and followed by other enforcement agencies of the country," Rajput said in its report.

FICCI has also requested the Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla to intervene into the vital issue and to sensitize other paramilitary forces on the gravity of the issue and amplify the need for a greater focus on combating smuggling and smuggling-related crimes at the borders. In order to create large-scale awareness of this menace, FICCI CASCADE has been conducting interactions with government and enforcement agencies across several states in India on the ways to mitigate this challenge.

FICCI also appealed to the central government to declare smuggling as a national threat and that should be addressed with stricter vigilance and reforms. Meanwhile,

security forces in Nagaland arrested four people for smuggling opium seeds worth Rs 1.44 crore on Saturday.

Officials in Kohima said that acting on secret information, Assam Rifles troopers impounded two trucks carrying 120 bags of Vietnamese Poppy near Piphema on National Highway-29.

The arrested persons and the seized contraband were handed over to custom preventive division officials.

Four Indian northeastern states --Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh share a 1,640-km unfenced border with Myanmar and the India-Myanmar border turned into the vital corridor for smuggling of drugs, arms and ammunition and other contraband.

**Source:** [https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/economic-distress-due-to-covid-19-causes-rise-in-smuggling-in-ne-ficci-120090600962\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/economic-distress-due-to-covid-19-causes-rise-in-smuggling-in-ne-ficci-120090600962_1.html)