



## Smuggling of foreign cigarettes Myanmar to India headache for security agencies

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**GUWAHATI:** The smuggling of foreign cigarettes from Myanmar to India is continuing unabated through the Manipur-Dimapur-Assam route, keeping the security forces on their toes as the cigarettes are then sent to other parts of the country.

With the route from Myanmar through Manipur, Dimapur, and Assam serving as the primary channel for their transportation to the rest of India, the smuggling of foreign cigarettes has not ceased and has turned into a headache for security agencies.

DRI (Directorate of Revenue Intelligence) sources revealed that Myanmar and Dubai are the main transit points for sending foreign cigarettes to Indian states. However, we are concerned with the Myanmar transit point, as such consignments enter India from Myanmar through its porous borders with Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland and reach Assam. From here, the smuggled cigarettes are transported to the rest of India, mainly as cargo.

According to sources, most of the smuggled cigarette brands violate the COTPA (Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act) by not following mandatory pictorial health warnings or inadequate displays of health warnings, not disclosing the place of manufacturing of the cigarette brands, not displaying information regarding the health hazards of cigarettes, etc. The cigarette brands smuggled into the state are mainly from China, Korea, Indonesia, and the UK.

High-profit margins by the local retailers, the craze of the local youths for foreign cigarette brands at cheaper rates, the tempting flavour of some of the cigarette brands, etc. are some of the reasons for this thriving smuggling racket.

Marlboro Gold, Benson & Hedges, Esse Light, Super Slim, and Win are the primary brands of cigarettes encapsulating this nefarious operation. The Customs Department continues to remain firm in its commitment to dismantling this smuggling network. The network is mainly responsible for the influx of contraband tobacco goods, notwithstanding frequent seizures and arrests.

In a recent operation, the Anti-Smuggling Unit of Customs, Guwahati Division, scored another victory in its fight against cigarette smuggling. They intercepted an impressive cache of foreign-origin cigarettes with an estimated value of Rs. 1 crore. The seizure was done at the India Post NPH facility in Mirza, near Guwahati Airport, customs sources said.

Foreign cigarette smuggling presents a widespread problem, posing myriad challenges. It results in a loss of crucial tax revenue for the government and also risks exposing consumers to health hazards. These hazards come with unregulated products with no proper pictorial warning or use by dates. There is also no information on the level of nicotine, tar, etc. that is harmful to health.

The security forces deserve all credit for their continued vigil against the smuggling of foreign-origin cigarettes, and their diligence has resulted in apprehensions, seizures, and arrests on a routine basis.

**Source:** <https://www.sentinelassam.com/topheadlines/smuggling-of-foreign-cigarettes-myanmar-to-india-headache-for-security-agencies>