

Assam government boosts promotion of local goods to counter illicit trade

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Debajyoti Dutta, Secretary, Food & Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of Assam said, "The criminals who are indulging in smuggling and counterfeiting activities are promoting crime and economic instability and the consumers are bearing the brunt of it. It is important that we instill pride for Indian brands and goods amongst the consumers. This will play a pivotal role in putting counterfeit and smuggled products out of the market." Addressing a webinar 'Combating Counterfeiting and Smuggling during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond', organized by FICCI's Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE), Mr. Dutta further said, "The menace of illicit trade is to be dealt in a dedicated and systematic manner with concerted efforts from all central and state enforcement agencies along with the paramilitary forces"

Mr. Pabitra Khaund, Secretary, Department of Industries & Commerce, Government of Assam said that the Prime Minister's call on 'Vocal for local' will be a potent tool in our fight against counterfeiting and smuggling. It will create a conducive environment for the economy of the state government and play a major role in strengthening India. He further added that the government of Assam has launched several schemes in this direction, which has immensely benefited local artisans and small enterprises.

Mr. G. M. Kamei, Commissioner, Commissionerate of Customs, North Eastern Region, highlighted the role of customs in addressing this menace in North Eastern region. He said, "The custom officers are working in close coordination with DRI, Assam Rifles and State Police to make the task of a smuggler a difficult one". The commissioner shared that during the Covid period they have successfully conducted 710 seizures of goods worth Rs. 110 cr.

Congratulating the Assam government and the enforcement agencies Mr. Anil Rajput, Chairman, FICCI CASCADE said, "The enforcement officials have relentlessly pursued the smugglers and counterfeiters in the North Eastern region and over the last few months seized contraband and illicit cigarettes, liquor, drugs, currency and consumer goods". He urged them to keep up the good work which will ensure that the perpetrators of illicit trade do not see the covid-19 situation as a reason to exploit vulnerable consumers and organizations.

The problem of illicit trade has only compounded in the current situation, where criminals have used the pandemic as an opportunity to cause significant damage on the economy of the nation, health and safety of the consumers. The webinar, focusing north east India was organized to discuss and understand the efforts that the Industry & government can take in tackling the flow of illicit products during the current crisis. The webinar also shared insights on the role of enforcement agencies such as the customs, play to thwart criminals who are cashing in during the crisis. All the speakers reiterated that consumer safety, safeguarding legitimate businesses while promoting indigenous production will play a significant role in the path to our economic recovery.

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