

Collaborative measures are required as an anti-smuggling initiative in the country: Hansraj Gangaram Ahir

NEW DELHI, 13 October 2016: “Safe borders are critical to the nation, hence collaborative measures are required as an anti-smuggling initiative in the country” stated **Shri Hansraj Gangaram Ahir**, Minister of State for Home Affairs, Govt. of India, during the Seminar on Border Management and Illicit Trade organized by FICCI CASCADE in collaboration with the Faculty of Studies, Border Security Force.

The Minister congratulated FICCI for this initiative and urged for suggestions from FICCI to address the issue of illicit trade and smart border management.

The existence and operation of illicit markets such as smuggling has been an enduring problem that has escalated in scope and magnitude, impacting industries, government, economies and, the health and safety of the consumers.

Moreover, smuggling operations have close links to terror organizations and criminal networks. In fact, it is today one of the biggest challenges faced by India and its industry, tarnishing the country’s image in the global arena. It is time that we, as a national and as a part of the global economy, call for stern and resolute counterstrike force against such ill-intentioned activities. This has several elements, starting with greater vigil at the borders.

Dr. Didar Singh, Secretary General FICCI in his welcome address stated that border guards were critical stakeholders in combating cross border illegal trading activities. On one hand, while open borders facilitate travel and trade, they also make border control more challenging due to the emerging new forms of cross border crimes. Hence, it becomes vital that officers at the borders are prepared to identify possible suspects and their victims in such ill-intentioned crimes.

Mr. Deep Chand, Advisor FICCI CASCADE and former special commissioner of Police, New Delhi said “Illicit trade across the borders is impacting the social fabric of nations; India in particular is a victim of large scale smuggling. This web of illicit trade has entangled not only the legal industry and governments, but also the consumers who are exposed to grave risks to life and security”.

Mr. K K Sharma, Director General, Border Security Force said “the initiative taken by FICCI CASCADE is a most welcome step. BSF looks forward to many more instances of such collaborations in future as these activities will surely help the organizations and industries contribute to nation building”

This seminar, attended by over 150 BSF officers from across the country, addressed ways and means to combat illegal cross-border flows, facilitate cooperation and coordination among stakeholders and aimed at sensitizing the officers on the magnitude of the menace.

Senior officials and eminent speakers from Border Security Force, Sashastra Seema Bal, Indo Tibetan Police Force, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Department of Homeland Security-Homeland Security Investigations, US Embassy etc were present to discuss and deliberate on issues such as Role of Enforcement Agencies and Challenges Encountered in Illegal Cross Border Trade; International Perspective on Illegal Cross Border Trade and Market and

Technologies.

On this occasion, a report on Need for Policy Reforms to Combat Illicit Markets – Case Study on Tobacco industry was also released. The report talks about trade of illicit cigarettes, which constitute a significant component of the tobacco industry and is leading to the loss of revenue to government, loss of business to the legitimate industry, livelihood opportunities, adversely impacting farmers, besides being a threat to national security.

Key findings of FICCI CASCADE Report on ‘Need for Policy Reforms to Combat Illicit Markets’ (Case Study on Tobacco Industry) are as follows:

- Smuggled cigarettes consumption has increased by over 90% (12.5 to 23.9 billion sticks) in last 10 years
- 74% smokers willing to switch to cheaply-priced smuggled or illegal cigarettes because of higher taxation on legal cigarettes
- Over 56% smokers prefer attractive packaging of foreign smuggled brands which doesn't adhere to Indian regulations like 85% health warning

FICCI MEDIA DIVISION