

## **ALAAV – CONSUMER CALLING**

14<sup>th</sup> September, 2012

FICCI CASCADE (Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy) in association with the Rotary Club of Kashmir valley, Srinagar, organized AALAV, Consumer Calling—Youth Festival on Consumer Rights on the theme of smuggling and counterfeiting at Islamic University of Science and Technology on 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.

The festival was inaugurated by Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture, Jammu & Kashmir, Ghulam Hassan Mir. Other dignitaries present at the event included Prof. A.R. Trag, Vice Chancellor Islamic University, Dr. Amit Wanchoo, President Rotary Club of Kashmir valley, Ms. Meenu Chandra, Head FICCI CASCADE and Mr. Brij Bhardwaj, Veteran Journalist. In a first of its kind event held at the Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, students highlighted the issue of counterfeit and fake products and the need for consumer awareness through painting competition, debates, short skit presentations by artists and students. A painting exhibition was part of the festival. The exhibition put up by FICCI-CASCADE included a collection of paintings by students of Delhi-NCR schools as part of the 5th Hum Kishore Festival 2012. The paintings highlighted the impact of fake and counterfeit products on consumers and the economy. The event commenced with 'TARANA', anthem of the university, thereafter the Registrar of the university welcomed all the guests and thanked FICCI CASCADE for having taken this initiative to highlight the issue of counterfeiting in the Kashmir valley. Dr. Amit Wanchoo, President rotary club, addressing the students shed light on how counterfeiting is affecting the wood carving, handicraft industry, saffron and the shawl industry of the valley. Due to this counterfeiting the skill and the heritage of the artisan is being lost as the next generation of the artisan is no more interested in continuing with the tradition thus destroying the local industry. Dr. Wanchoo pointed out that the situation in the valley is alarming and all the sectors together must target at creating awareness among the consumer and take the movement forward. He said that the students are the future of tomorrow and they need to take the initiative to take forward the message and help to curb this menace. He further mentioned that FICCI CASCADE is a vibrant platform which has taken initiative to generate awareness and sensitize people towards this evil. Ms. Meenu Chandra addressing the gathering talked about the importance and the gravity of the issue and how youth can take this movement forward. She emphasized that the governments of all states should make this a vital agenda which needs immediate action. FICCI CASCADE through its various initiatives is trying to create awareness among the consumers about the issue of counterfeiting and its impact on the life of the consumer, economy and the brand. Veteran journalist Mr. Brij Bhardawaj addressing the gathering talked about the strength of Kashmir where in the past people in the valley have faced a lot of problems but still they have a lot of resilience and can fight together on this issue. Vice Chancellor, Prof. A.R Trag welcomed all the guests to have graced the occasion. He appreciated the title of the event ALAAV-Consumer Calling and thanked FICCI CASCADE to have approached the University to commence the first youth festival in the country. He said such crucial steps of creating awareness among the consumers about the counterfeit products are essential for revival of the cottage industry of the valley and most essentially saffron and handloom sector. He was quick to point out that the problem today is lack of passion and through such events, awareness and passion is to be ignited among the consumers. There is

a need for consumers to demand their right of unadulterated genuine products. He gave some specific examples where the government has taken some steps towards safeguarding the interest of saffron producers by providing them high yielding variety of seeds due to which the production of saffron has increased many folds. He mentioned despite such measures the real problem lies in the supply chain where the counterfeits are mixed with the genuine products and the brand of Kashmiri saffron suffers loss. The Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Ghulam Hasan Mir while addressing the gathering expressed his gratitude to FICCI CASCADE and the Islamic University to have invited him for such an event where he has had the opportunity to come forward and interact with students on the issue which is of great concern even to the government. He mentioned that such events make everyone aware of the responsibility and what all is required to eradicate the evils of society; one of which is counterfeiting. He said counterfeiting today has deep roots in society and the impacts are far more hazardous than one imagines to be. He said that things can be discussed politically but the impact or result of such political discussion takes a long time and are not very effective. He complemented FICCI CASCADE for grabbing the right nerve by involving youth in the movement as any movement taken in hands by the youth has far reaching and long lasting impact. He said the need is to identify the problem and curb it; the beginning should not be the end. He further suggested that university being an autonomous body can even start a course on such topics which would give students a real platform to act upon the problem. He said the role of government cannot be discarded and laws need to be stringent and strong to discourage the criminal. The event started with the elocution competition where student focused on different sectors which suffer due to counterfeiting and put forth some vibrant and remarkable solutions to the problem. Similarly painting competition was held to portray the problem of counterfeiting through art. An entertaining skit depicting in a humorous manner the issue as well as how the counterfeits enter the supply chain and the ultimate loss is suffered by the artisan and the consumer was enacted.