

4th ANTI-SMUGGLING DAY

FICCI's Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE) organized the 4th edition of Anti-Smuggling Day on 11th February 2025. The conference provided a platform to the stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions on the evolving nature of smuggling and its impact on economies and societies. The conference focused on strengthening collaborative efforts, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, and discovering innovative solutions to curb smuggling.

FICCI CASCADE identified 11th February as Anti-Smuggling Day, with an aim to unite all enforcement agencies to collectively comprehend the extent of the problem and explore avenues for enhanced cooperation and coordination.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Mohan Kumar Singh, Member (Compliance Management), Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs said, "There are various challenges that law enforcement agencies face in tackling smuggling including going after the criminal syndicates or the key persons who are financing such illegal operations; it is not enough to just catch the carrier. To put a big dent into the smuggling network, we need to have enough data, skill sets and tools to analyze the data and intelligence coordination. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence has taken the lead to establish an anti-smuggling coordination platform so that all agencies come forward and share relevant information and work towards eliminating smuggling activities and catching the real culprits."

Addressing the FICCI CASCADE's 'Anti-Smuggling Day' Mr Singh while highlighting the importance of inter-agency cooperation, said, "We need to upgrade the use of technology in effectively combatting smuggling. It is important to focus on operational readiness and coordination among agencies to tackle cross border smuggling. Also, recognition by the United Nations of this anti-smuggling day will create more international awareness on the issue, thereby contributing to the efforts in stemming this malaise."

Highlighting the colossal nature of the problem of smuggling in the context of a rising Bharat, Mr Anil Rajput, Chairman, FICCI CASCADE, said, "Along with the government and enforcement agencies it is critical that the consumers increasingly come forward and play their part in the battle against smuggling and illicit trade. It is critical that the dissemination of information and exposure to facts related to smuggling is extended to the children and the youth. Additionally, I cannot overemphasize the importance of using advanced technology to counter smuggling and its offshoots. I am confident that the coming together of all these elements will lead to an effective and sustained response against this formidable adversary."

Mr Pankaj Kumar Singh, IPS, Former Deputy National Security Advisor, Government of India said, "There are now new models of smuggling that involves technology such as the usage of drones that enables the creation of huge margins for these illegal activities. The message from the government is clear that no smuggling or infiltration is to be permitted. There have been multiple instances of shooting down of drones carrying illegal goods but given the enormous length of our borders, challenges remain."

“There is no dearth of right minded, nationalist and country loving people in this country who are willing to help and law enforcement agencies need to approach them to get relevant information and intelligence. We have made lot of strides in technology adoption by law enforcement agencies such as scouting the dark net to get leads to catch smugglers. Technology combined with human intelligence is the way forward to fight this menace of illicit trade,” Mr Singh added.

Mr R.K. Pachnanda, Former Director General, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Indo Tibetan Border Police said, “This is the fourth annual anti-smuggling day and I laud the efforts of FICCI CASCADE towards tackling smuggling. This illicit trade is a challenge to the security of the nation and the government has been fighting this menace by being cognizant of the peculiarities and the terrain of the different border areas of India. The proactive approach of the government has led to greater action by border guarding forces and the enforcement agencies; it has led to great coordination between the administrative, security, diplomatic, intelligence, and economic agencies. Organisations like FICCI CASCADE also contribute towards organizing awareness campaigns among these stakeholders that help in tackling the issue.”

As a run-up to this year’s Anti-Smuggling Day, and to sensitize the youth on the menace of smuggled goods, FICCI CASCADE had organized a Digital Art Competition on the theme, ‘Stand Against Smuggling’. The competition received an overwhelming response, with an astounding 3,000 entries from across the country, showcasing their remarkable talent and creativity. The initiative seeks to inspire a deeper commitment among the youth to contribute to societal change by championing ethical consumer behaviour and thereby becoming responsible citizens. Winners of the competition were felicitated in the conference by the invited dignitaries.

During the programme, FICCI CASCADE also highlighted the 2023-24 DRI Smuggling in India report that stated the government seized more than 8000 kgs of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, apart from other contraband items in huge quantities. While the seizure rates have gone up considerably, it is only the tip of the iceberg.

Apart from drugs, the DRI report also highlighted that 1319 kgs of gold and Rs. 178.82 crores worth of smuggled cigarettes were seized. These kinds of smuggling result in revenue loss to the government. For instance, according to international research reports, confiscation rates vary between 3 to 4 percent and based on this, it can be estimated that the illicit market of cigarettes is likely to be between Rs. 17,250 and Rs. 23,000 crores. Additionally, as per industry estimates, the loss to the exchequer stands at approximately Rs. 21,000 crores.

Over the years, FICCI CASCADE has been consistently working towards creating awareness on tackling the serious problem of smuggling and launched the Anti-Smuggling Day in 2022 as a global first. The objective of declaring an Anti-Smuggling Day was to highlight the issue amongst consumers, adverse impact of smuggling on nation-building, fostering coordination and cooperation among law enforcement agencies, facilitating better exchange of information and experiences and building a strong network to find innovative solutions to combat the scourge of smuggling.

Smuggling is a widespread issue that transcends national borders, affecting countries and regions globally. Despite government’s ongoing efforts to curb this illegal trade such as bolstering border security, enforcing stricter trade regulations, and fostering international cooperation to dismantle criminal syndicates — smuggling remains a persistent challenge that needs immediate attention.