FICCI’s Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE) recently organized the 9th edition of its International Conference: MASCRADE 2023 – Movement Against Smuggled and Counterfeit Trade on 28-29 September 2022 in New Delhi.

Addressing the two-day event, Mr Anurag Thakur, Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Youth Affairs & Sports, emphasized that the surge in illicit trade is a troubling consequence of globalization which casts a shadow on our progress toward achieving a 5 trillion-dollar economy. “Illicit trade, whether conducted through activities like smuggling, counterfeiting, or tax evasion, exacts a considerable socio-economic toll. It not only hinders our advancement but also drives up expenses, pushing these crucial goals even further from our reach,” he added.

Mr Thakur stated that by addressing the nexus between illicit trade, organized crime and terrorism, we not only protect our economy but also contribute to a safer and more peaceful world. “The fight against illicit trade is not just an economic battle; it is a battle for peace, stability, and the future of our world,” he highlighted.

Speaking on the various initiatives by the government, Mr Thakur said, “We have been enacting laws that not only align with our international commitments but also exhibit a progressive outlook. However, given the intricate and alarming expansion of illicit trade, it underscores the need for enhanced intergovernmental collaborations and public-private partnerships to formulate a comprehensive strategy,” he noted.

Mr Anil Rajput, Chairman, FICCI CASCADE, said, “Illicit trade has been seen mostly from the prism of loss to the exchequer. However, it has many more facets that impact our society. This unscrupulous global business has its tentacles reaching far and wide and compromises the safety and security of nations due to their sinister linkages with organized crime networks and terror financing.”

“Our Hon’ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has been underscoring the need to eliminate the root cause for terror funding. A clear mandate from the highest office of the government makes it evident that India is focused in building a global momentum against terror funding by eradicating the streams of finance,” he added.

Hon’ble Mr. Justice KV Viswanathan, Judge, Supreme Court of India, during the Valedictory Address said, “One suggestion for policymakers to make counterfeiting less attractive is they should adopt suitable tax measures for genuine products. If you make counterfeiting less attractive in terms of price by having a rational tax structure, it could be a serious disincentive for them to resort to this. We need to ensure that all stakeholders come together to tackle this issue. Judiciary can come in to play a stellar role but it can only be one of the components.”

Addressing the inaugural session of the two-day event, Mr. Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, Chairman, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said, “Illicit trade undermines national security, risks legitimate manufacturing, leaks government revenue, jeopardizes public health and safety, and erodes the trust of consumers and investors alike. Tackling this issue is fundamental for safeguarding India’s economic...
stability, ensuring fair competition and fostering an environment conducive to sustainable growth and ease of doing business. CBIC plays a crucial role in the fight against illicit trade in its entirety,” he added.

Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General, World Customs Organization, said that to combat these threats and smuggling risks, customs administrations need to prioritize risk management and profiling based on timely and accurate information, intelligence exchange and analysis, including advance cargo and passenger information.

Mr. Anil Sinha, Former Director, CBI and Think Tank Member, FICCI CASCADE said that we need to collectively strategize against the activities of illicit trade. This is the time of action and we must move in this direction,” he added.