

Consumer awareness has become an imperative part of the anti-counterfeiting strategy in developed economies

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New Delhi,

Hem Kumar Pande, Former Secretary, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, GoI today said that given the economic condition of our country, consumer awareness has become a propeller of the anti-counterfeiting strategy.

Addressing the webinar on **Consumer Protection in the COVID age organised by FICCI's Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE) on World Anti-Counterfeiting Day**, the former secretary said, the '**Jaago Grahak Jaago**' campaign of the Indian Government has received reasonable success with urban consumers looking out for the safety and genuineness of the product. However, we still have a long way to go to inculcate and develop a sense of responsibility amongst the rural consumer base."

Mr Shibesh Singh, Additional Commissioner (Crime), Delhi Police said, "there has been a significant rise of frauds against public during the second wave of the coronavirus. During the recent wave of the pandemic, he said, the Delhi police were able to block almost 550 fraud bank accounts, seized more than 1.25 crore rupees, and suspended almost 1500 sim cards."

Highlighting the problem of black marketing and selling of counterfeit, fake, spurious covid cure products, Mr Singh said, "with the help of local enforcement agencies, Delhi police arrested more than 300 black marketers and broke the backbone of COVID related crime syndicate".

Emphasizing the unwavering efforts of the DRI officers during the unprecedented coronavirus crisis, **Mr Rajesh Pandey, Pr Additional Director General, DRI** said, “during the pandemic year, DRI has seized 984Kgs of gold & illicit cigarette sticks worth more than 100 crores along with seizures a large amount of heroin, cocaine, hashish, opium, and synthetic drugs.”

He added that the Covid 19 pandemic impacted manufacturing and trade, and the gap was filled with counterfeit and smuggled products. “Law enforcement and trade & industry must work more closely so that illicit activities can be neutralised to a great extent”, he further urged.

Mr Anil Rajput, Chairman, FICCI CASCADE in his welcome address said, “the Covid-19 virus and illicit trade have a lot in common, both cause immense economic, social and individual distress.” Applauding the enforcement officers who have relentlessly pursued the smugglers and counterfeiters and seized many contraband and fake products during the current crisis, Mr Rajput urged them to keep up the good work which will ensure that the perpetrators of crime do not see the covid-19 situation as a reason to exploit vulnerable consumers and organizations.

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