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Bengal govt fighting counterfeiting amid pandemic: Minister

New Delhi, July 8 (IANS) West Bengal Minister in-charge for Consumer Affairs, Sadhan Pande, has said that counterfeiting and smuggling are two major economic crimes across the globe and the state government is making extra efforts to combat such crimes amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Addressing a webinar organised by FICCI's Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE), Pande invited CASCADE to join hands with his department to run a campaign on the subject in West Bengal.

Deepankar Aron, Additional Director General, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Kolkata, said that smuggling and counterfeiting is the second most significant illegal trade, according to a FICCI CASCADE statement.

Citing the recent major detections by the DRI and Customs formations, Aron said that in the last one year, 570 kg of gold valued at Rs 220 crore and foreign currency worth Rs 30 crore were seized.

Several cases of smuggled cigarettes were detected where a total of 2.6 crore cigarette sticks valued at around Rs 26 crore were seized, he added.

Hem Pande, Former Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, said that the menace of illicit trade is impacting jobs, economy besides creating havoc all around the world.

"Strengthening enforcement and empowering consumers to combat such crimes should be the constant endeavour," he said.

Anil Rajput, Chairman, FICCI CASCADE, said: "I am delighted that a suggestion has been made that the West Bengal government and FICCI CASCADE join hands and work together on the extremely important aspect of consumer awareness. Illicit trade is indeed a big menace, and we all have to work together to eradicate this evil, which has made deep inroads in our country."The webinar, which was attended by industry and government officials, and officers from the enforcement agencies and stakeholders, also highlighted the efforts of the industry in tackling the flow of illicit products during the current crisis.

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