

Counterfeit medicines kill more people than terror: CBI chief

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NEW DELHI: More people have died due to consuming counterfeit medicines than those who have died of terrorism in the last 40 years, CBI director Anil Sinha said on Wednesday, while quoting an estimate of international agency Interpol.

Few years ago, Interpol estimated that while more than

65,000 people were killed in over 40 years in transnational terrorist incidents, the estimates of deaths caused by fake medicines range from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands annually.

CBI director, meanwhile, said that the problem of counterfeit medicines (all over the world) was 'alarming' and there was an urgent need to fight the growing menace.

"According to an Interpol Report released in July, 2014, two 'types' of Organized Criminal Groups seem to dominate this crime area: highly organized, yet generally informal, international affiliate networks selling medicines via illicit online pharmacies as well as small groups, not yet well established, of between 3-10 members, involved in various aspects of pharmaceutical crime," said Sinha, adding that the scenario the world over is 'alarming'.

"Though the ramification of this menace is worldwide, it is more pronounced in developing and under developed nations," Sinha said.

Sinha added that the problem was taking a 'transnational organized' crime shape in India, which may adversely affect the economy.

Rs 27.6 crore fake drugs market may not be an alarming situation but it cannot be ignored as it is slowly taking the shape of a transnational organised crime, Sinha said at CBI headquarters while inaugurating the first Indo-French workshop on 'Combating Counterfeit Medicine' alongwith French Ambassador to India François Richier.

Sinha said that in the last two decades, the Indian pharmaceutical industry has achieved a positive trade balance in the export market, which initial estimates put at around \$9-10 billion.

"Under the aegis of Central Drugs Standard Control Organization, a systematic study was carried out to assess actual extent of spurious drug circulation in India. It was concluded that the extent of spurious drug in retail pharmacy is only 0.046%," the

CBI director said.

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According to industry estimates, the Indian pharma sector is worth \$20 billion of which nearly half is exported. The retail market is of about \$10 billion which means the fake drug market is worth Rs 27.6 crore.

Talking about the gravity of problem, Sinha said, "Counterfeit medicines are difficult to detect. No region or country is immune from this problem.

Apart from the very real direct dangers presented by the consumption of fraudulent medicines or use of fake medical devices there is also evidence showing that the trade in such products has over time become an important source of income for organized crime groupings – be they informal networks or the more traditional organized crime groups. These criminal networks are involved in all types of pharmaceutical crimes, such as falsifying, diverting, stealing or illicitly selling medicines over the internet".

The first Indo-French workshop on the issue for police officers and investigators is being organised in collaboration with the French embassy; Institute of Research Against Counterfeit Medicines, France; Central Office Against Environmental & Public Health Violations, France and Central Fight Against Harm to the Environment And Public Health (OCLAESP).

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