

(iii) The report on cases disposed by Consumer Fora is sought by National Commissions monthly. The National Commission holds annual conference of the Presidents of the State Commissions and Secretaries In-charge, Consumer Affairs of the State Governments/ UTs of evaluate the functioning of the Consumer Forums in the country.

(iv) Some of the State Commissions and District Fora are adopting the process of holding Lok Adalats for speedy disposal of the cases. The National Commission has also started holding Lok Adalat. The National Commission also holds Circuit Bench sittings as per the provisions of Section 22C of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. So far, the National Commission has held Circuit Bench sittings at Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Pune, and Kolkata. In the following States Circuit Benches/Additional Benches are functioning :

(a) Gujarat	03 Additional Benches
(b) Maharashtra	Circuit Bench at Nagpur & Aurangabad.
(c) Uttar Pradesh	01 Additional Bench
(d) West Bengal	01 Additional Bench
(e) Madhya Pradesh	01 Additional Bench
(f) Punjab	01 Additional Bench

(v) In addition to the existing five Benches of the National Commission, the Central Government has recently sanctioned one additional bench for the National Commission for a period of five years for disposing off backlog of pending cases.

(vi) Financial assistance is being provided by the Central Government to the States/UTs for strengthening of infrastructure of District Fora and State Commissions (Building as well as Non-Building Assets) under the scheme "Strengthening Consumer Fora " for the 11th Plan period. Financial assistance is also being provided to the States/UTs for computerization and networking of all the Consumer Fora across the country under the scheme "CONFONET".

Bogus ration cards

3470. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Central Government has warned bogus ration card holders to surrender their cards or face penal action;

(b) if so, whether Central Government has directed State Governments to invoke the provisions under the Public Distribution System (Central) Order, 2001 to initiate proceedings against those, who infringed on provisions of the Order; and

(c) if so, the manner in which the Central Government will check and ensure that bogus ration cards are completely eliminated from the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and the State/Union Territory (UT) Governments. Central Government is responsible for procurement, allocation and transportation of foodgrains upto the designated depots of the Food Corporation of India. The operational responsibilities for allocation of foodgrains within the States/UTs, identification of eligible Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, issuance of ration cards to them and supervision over and monitoring of functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) rest with the concerned State/UT Governments. Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001 mandates the State/UT Governments to issue ration cards to eligible applicants and to conduct periodical checking of ration cards to weed out ineligible and bogus ration cards as well as bogus units in ration cards.

Instructions have been issued in September, 2010 to all State/UT Governments to issue warning to the bogus card holders, through advertisements in the newspapers, to surrender the bogus cards, otherwise criminal prosecution may be initiated against them.

To streamline the functioning of TPDS, in consultation with the State Governments, a Nine Point Action Plan was evolved in 2006, which *inter-alia* includes continuous review of BPL/AAY lists and to eliminate bogus/ineligible ration cards. Instructions were also issued to all State/UT Governments to carry out an intensive campaign from October, 2009 to December, 2009 to review the existing lists of BPL/AAY families and eliminate ineligible/bogus ration cards. Special instructions were issued in January, 2008 to all State/UT Governments to take action as per law against the families/persons found in possession of bogus or fake ration cards and also against officials found responsible for issuing ration cards to ineligible families/persons.