

Bringing brand ambassadors within purview of consumer Protection Act

†612. SHRI PRABHAT JHA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether cases of misleading claims in the advertisements of several popular products have come to light recently even as these products are being endorsed by famous personalities/brand ambassadors, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the brand ambassador does not come under the ambit of Consumer Protection Act currently, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether there is a proposal to bring the brand ambassadors within the purview of Consumer Protection Act, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) Yes, Sir. 1046 complaints relating to misleading advertisements have come to notice of the Department of Consumer Affairs between March, 2015 and March, 2016.

(b) The existing Consumer Protection Act, 1986 provides for making a complaint against unfair trade practice in a Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission/Forum. As per section 2(1) (r) (1) (i) of the said Act, the practice of making any statement, whether orally or in writing or by visible representation which falsely represents that the goods are of a particular standard, quality, quantity, grade, composition, style or model, is treated as an unfair trade practice, against which a consumer can make a complaint in a Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.

(c) On the Consumer Protection Bill, 2015, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution has recommended stringent punishment to check misleading advertisements and to fix responsibility of celebrities and brand ambassadors.

Help desk for consumer under PDS

613. SHRI ANUBHAV MOHANTY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the huge nationwide network of PDS is inter-connected through computer;

(b) if so, whether all information about the availability of stock of all items supplied through PDS is uploaded in the public domain and updated regularly;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether there is any proposal to launch 24x7 Call Centres/Help Desks for consumers to seek any kind of information about the availability of stock or to make any complaint against any PDS functionary regarding their services or otherwise; and

(d) if not, how does the Ministry propose to provide information to the consumers about its departments for their benefit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) to (d) Department of Food and Public Distribution is implementing a Plan Scheme on 'End-to-end Computerization of TPDS Operations' during Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17). Under this scheme, financial and technical assistance is being provided to States/UTs by this department for digitization of ration cards/beneficiaries and other data bases, online allocation, computerization of supply chain management, setting up of transparency portals and grievance redressal mechanisms. Under this scheme NIC is a technical partner for the development and maintenance of PDS related common application software, etc. .

Distribution of foodgrains is responsibility of the State. All States/UTs have completed digitization of ration cards. Presently 25 States/UTs have implemented Online Allocation module. Under Supply Chain Management, States have to display stock position at Godowns, movement of foodgrains, etc. on State PDS portal. 15 States/UTs have already completed Supply Chain Automation.

Under this scheme, Toll Free Helpline Number and Online Grievance Redressal System has been implemented by 32 and 35 States/UTs respectively.

Digitization of ration cards

614. SHRI NARENDRA KUMAR SWAIN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether digitization of ration cards has been completed by all States in the country, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether some States are unable to meet the deadline set by the Centre, if so, the details of those States; and

(c) whether Government has any plan to give more time to those States to complete the digitization drive of ration cards?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) During the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17), Government has approved a plan scheme on