

Public Distribution System plays a critical role in supplementing access to staple food, especially to poor households. In an unforeseen event of natural calamity, dependence on PDS increases if the supply of foodgrains falls below the requirement.

**Protection of consumer rights under e-commerce**

232. DR. VINAY P. SAHASRABUDDHE:

SHRI SANJAY RAUT:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the consumer rights and protection with respect to the e-commerce, are not effectively being dealt within the existing Consumer Protection Act;

(b) if so, the details in this regard along with the measures taken by Government to protect the rights of e-consumers; and

(c) how Government is planning to address the issues such as the place of business, jurisdiction, non-availability of common dispute resolution system, etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) and (b) The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 covers all goods and services and all modes of transaction including e-commerce. Under the provisions of the Act, a three tier quasi-judicial mechanism has been set up at the District, State and National levels to provide simple, speedy and inexpensive resolution to consumer disputes. In addition, the Department of Consumer Affairs has been operating a National Consumer Helpline through the Centre for Consumer Studies, Indian Institute of Public Administration to empower and educate the consumers about their rights and responsibilities and to redress the consumer grievances. The Department has also supported a project of the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru for setting up of Online Consumer Mediation Centre (OCMC) for resolving consumer disputes, especially relating to e-commerce transactions.

(c) Keeping in view the changes in the market and the rapid development of e-commerce leading to new challenges for the consumers, the existing Consumer Protection Act is being amended providing, *inter alia*, for provisions for regulating e-commerce. The Consumer Protection Bill, 2015, already introduced in Parliament, provides for:—

- (i) Setting up of a Central Consumer Protection Authority to protect the rights of the consumers and to prevent unfair trade practices including initiating class action;

- (ii) Provision for mediation as an Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism;
- (iii) Provision for product liability action to make manufacturers liable for injury caused from unsafe products; and
- (iv) Simplification of consumer dispute adjudication process in the consumer fora which include, among others, filing complaints in consumer fora that have jurisdiction over the place of residence of the complainant.

**Lack of storage facilities**

†233. SHRI AMAR SHANKAR SABLE: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that huge quantity of foodgrains get rotten due to lack of storage facilities in the country, including Maharashtra, if so, the details thereof, State-wise;
- (b) the details of provision of funds for this purpose during the last three years and the amount spent out of this by December, 2016, State-wise; and
- (c) the provision of funds made by Government for warehouses in 2017-18 Budget and the steps taken for suitable storage of foodgrains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) There is no report of damage to huge quantities of foodgrains due to shortage of storage facilities. Adequate storage capacity is available with Food Corporation of India (FCI) and State Agencies for storage of Central pool stocks.

State-wise details of the foodgrains accrued as damaged/non-issuable in FCI including Maharashtra during last three years and current year are given in Statement-I (*See below*).

A quantity of 7942.008 MT had become non-issuable during 2016-17 (upto Dec'16) in Maharashtra region due to negligence in handling and a claim of ₹ 22.29 crores has been recovered from the concerned agency.

(b) Department of Food and PD is implementing Plan Scheme 'Construction of Storage Godowns' under which the provision of fund allocated/released/utilized State-wise, during the last three years and current financial year (by December, 2016) is given in Statement-II (*See below*).

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.