

per the extant norms, the State Governments/UT Administrations have been requested to ensure the lifting of foodgrains from FCI (in non-DCP States) or State Godown (in DCP States) by the last day of the month preceding the allocation month. Under NFSA, the receipt of foodgrains by the beneficiary in time is a legal entitlement and therefore it is imperative that the States/UTs lift the foodgrains within the validity period and ensure its timely distribution to the targeted beneficiary. Further, States/UTs have been permitted for advance lifting and distribution of upto six months ration in one go to the beneficiaries under NFSA.

**Steps taken to protect consumers in online purchasing/business**

1528. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that online purchase/e-commerce business has grown speedily in the country during the last two years, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether consumers are facing various problems like payment, quality, quantity and manufacturing defects, services, etc. after purchasing the products;

(c) if so, the details thereof and Government's response thereto; and

(d) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken for the protection of consumers in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C.R. CHAUDHARY): (a) It has been informed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology that as per NASSCOM India's e-commerce market is estimated to be USD 33 billion in the financial year 2017 and has grown by 19% over the financial year 2016.

(b) and (c) The complaints received in the National Consumer Helpline indicate that consumers face problems like payment, quality, quantity and manufacturing defects, services, etc. after purchasing the products. The details of the complaints relating to e-commerce during the last financial year 2016-17, registered in National Consumer Helpline, are as under:-

Nature of Complaints	Number of Complaints
Paid amount not refunded	11595
Delivery of Defective Product	8106
Deficiency in Services	7029
Poor quality/Spurious/Fake Products	2040
TOTAL	28770

The complaints are forwarded to the companies concerned for resolution. In the event of non-resolution of a complaint or no response from the company, the consumer is advised to approach an appropriate consumer forum established under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

(d) At present, there is a three-tier quasi-judicial mechanism in place for redressal of consumer grievances. These are District Fora at the districts, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in States and the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission at the Centre. In addition, as an alternative means of grievance redressal, a National Consumer Helplines (NCH) has also been established.

The Department has introduced Consumer Protection Bill, 2015 in the Lok Sabha in August, 2015. The Bill contains a number of provisions to strengthen the consumer grievance redressal mechanism.

#### **Standards for gold in the country**

1529. DR. KANWAR DEEP SINGH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that standards for 18, 22 and 24 carat gold have not been fixed so far in the country, if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether gold, without hallmark, is also being sold in the market, if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) No. Sir. The grades of 18, 22 and 24 carat gold were specified in Indian Standard 1417:1999 in the year 1999. The Indian Standard on Gold Hallmarking has been revised with effect from 1st January, 2017. Now the grades of 18, 22 and 24 carat gold have been specified in Indian Standard 1417:2016 on Gold and Gold alloys, Jewellery/artefacts. This standard specifies gold content (fineness) in terms of parts per thousand.

Grades of fine gold (fineness 999) and standard gold (fineness 995) are used for manufacture of gold bullion and coins and grades of 22 carat (fineness 916), 18 carat (fineness 750) and 14 carat (fineness 585) are used in manufacture of gold jewellery/artefacts.

(b) Yes, sir. As the hallmarking scheme is voluntary in nature, both hallmarked as well as without hallmark jewellery/artefacts are sold in the market.