

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 721 (OIH)

TO BE ANSWERED ON 08.12.2023

CONSUMER RIGHTS

721. SHRI GHANSHYAM TIWARI
(OIH)

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

- (a) whether Government has implemented any scheme during the last three years to educate consumers about their rights;
- (b) if so, the expenditure incurred on the scheme during the last three years including current year, State-wise and year-wise;
- (c) the number of complaints received and the number of complaints on which action has been taken by Government to protect the rights of consumers; and
- (d) whether Government is also planning to speed up its redressal mechanism to avoid delays in handling complaints, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE, CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) to (d) : Department of Consumer Affairs is continuously working for consumer protection and empowerment of consumers by enactment of progressive legislations. With a view to modernize the framework governing the consumer protection in the new era of globalization, technologies, e-commerce markets etc. Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was repealed and Consumer Protection Act, 2019 was enacted.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 provides for redressal of the grievances of consumer through specialized three-tier quasi-judicial agencies, now commonly known as 'National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (NCDRC)' at National level, 'State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (SCDRC)' at State level, and 'District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (DCDRC)' at District level.

The Act, inter-alia, also provides for simplification of the adjudication process in the Consumer Commissions; filing of a complaint by a consumer in the Consumer Commission having jurisdiction with respect to his place of work/ residence irrespective of place of transaction and place of business or residence of the opposite parties, e-filing and e-payment, video conferencing for hearing, deemed admissibility of complaints if admissibility is not decided within 21 days of filing; mediation to facilitate early disposal of cases; provision of product liability.

Provision for filing cases online through e-Daakhil has been introduced in NCDRC and Consumer Commissions of 35 States/UTs at the district and state level for speedy and hassle-free resolution of cases.

Section 38(7) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 prescribes that every complaint shall be disposed of as expeditiously as possible and endeavour shall be made to decide the complaint within a period of three months from the date of receipt of notice by opposite party where the complaint does not require analysis or testing of commodities and within five months if it requires analysis or testing of commodities.

Department of Consumer Affairs has notified 17 Rules and 6 Regulations under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 for the protection of rights and interests of consumers which, inter-alia, includes E-Commerce Rules, Direct Selling Rules, Mediation Rules, Search and Seizure and Compounding of offences by the Central Authority and Crediting of Penalty Rules etc.

Government has also taken several initiatives recently for the protection of consumers from misleading and deceptive advertisements, fake reviews, and unfair trade practices. Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has been established w.e.f. 24.07.2020 to regulate matters relating to violation of rights of consumers, unfair trade practices and false or misleading advertisements which are prejudicial to the interests of public and consumers as a class.

The CCPA has notified the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022 on 9th June, 2022. These guidelines inter-alia provide for; (a) conditions for an advertisement to be non-misleading and valid; (b) certain stipulations in respect of bait advertisements and free claim advertisements; and, (c) duties of manufacturer, service provider, advertiser and advertising agency.

The Central Consumer Protection Authority has also issued Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023 recently on 30th November, 2023 to provide for prevention and regulation of dark patterns.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has notified framework on 'Online Consumer Reviews — Principles and Requirements for their Collection, Moderation and Publication' on 23.11.2022 for safeguarding and protecting consumer interest from fake and deceptive reviews in e-commerce. The standards are voluntary and are applicable to every online platform which publishes consumer reviews. The guiding principles of the standard are integrity, accuracy, privacy, security, transparency, accessibility and responsiveness.

The Department has revamped, the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) which has emerged as a single point of access to consumers across the country for grievance redressal at pre-litigation stage. Consumers can register their grievances from all over the country in 17 languages through a toll-free number 1915. These grievances can be registered on Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism (INGRAM), an omni channel IT enabled central portal, through various channels- Whats App, SMS, mail, NCH app, web portal, Umang app as per their convenience.

This helpline works in a dedicated manner from 8 AM to 8 PM on all seven days of the week except national holidays. For this purpose, an exclusive call centre has been established and to facilitate increase of access to our consumers, callback facility is also available from 8 PM to 8 AM. Further, NCH has also partnered with prominent stakeholders, namely- private companies, regulators, ombudsman government agencies to bring them altogether on a single online IT platform where in all grievances are collated in a central repository with unique docket numbers. Currently 813 convergence partners are in collaboration with NCH to offer speedy resolution to consumer grievances.

Transformative changes and technological upgradation of the NCH has led to an increase in the call handling facility. Number of calls received at NCH has exponentially increased from 60,806 in November 2021 to 90,973 in November 2022 and was at 1,32,209 in November 2023. Initiatives taken by the Department have also encouraged consumers to register their grievances on the NCH which is manifested with an increase in the number of grievances registered at NCH.

The details of total number of grievances received on the National Consumer Helpline during the last three years may be seen below. All the grievances received at NCH have been disposed of.

Year	Total grievances
FY-2022-23	10,05,985
FY-2021-22	7,44,625
FY-2020-21	6,74,820

The Department is also implementing an exclusive scheme namely “Consumer Awareness” to generate consumer awareness and empower the consumers under the aegis of “Jago Grahak Jago” campaign through various media including electronic, outdoor and social media.

The Department in 2022-23 has launched “Jagriti”, a mascot for empowering consumers and generating awareness of their rights. Jagriti is projected as an empowered young consumer.

The Department participates in prominent fairs/festivals/events where a large number of people may congregate. The Department also releases grant-in-aid to various States/UTs for generating awareness at local level.

The year-wise details of grant-in-aid released to States/UTs, (keeping in view the proposals received and utilization certificate), under “Consumer Awareness” scheme is given below:

2020-21

S. No.	Name of State	Amount Released (in Rs.)
1.	Madhya Pradesh	78,00,000
2	Tripura	40,00,000

2021-22

S. No.	Name of State	Amount Released (in Rs.)
1.	Maharashtra	1,00,00,000

2022-23

S. No.	Name of State	Amount Released (in Rs.)
1.	Madhya Pradesh	40,000,00
2.	Sikkim	40,000,00
3.	Nagaland	39,95,980
4.	Mizoram	39,84,000