

Consumer Dialogue

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E-newsletter

Rajasthan Needs a Massive Campaign on Consumer Awareness – Dr Lalit Mehra

There is an urgent need of a massive campaign on consumer awareness in Rajasthan as this is the best way for protecting consumer rights, said Dr Lalit Mehra, Principal Secretary, Government of Rajasthan, Department of Food, Civil Supply and Consumer Affairs. Talking about the efforts made by the Government, Mehra said that the Government has issued orders to District Supply Officers and Enforcement Offices in every district to help consumers resolve their complaints. Mehra was speaking on the occasion of an event organised by CUTS to commemorate World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) 2013 on March 18, 2013 at Jaipur.

Dr Mehra expressed concern on the plight of awareness status of consumers. He said that it is true that awareness level is low in Rajasthan

even though numbers of cases are increasing in the consumer forum day-by-day. He said that marketing strategies are always influencing consumers but they need to understand their need and look at quantity, quality and rate.

Emphasising on the next steps to be taken, he said that it is time to look at the loopholes in the system and take corrective measures. While underlining the importance of consumer awareness, he stressed on the urgent need of a massive campaign on consumer awareness in Rajasthan to protect consumer rights. Rajasthan has to go a long way to go in speeding-up dissemination of messages and generating awareness. He assured that necessary steps will be taken and help of CSOs sought.

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS explained the relevance of the WCRD and elaborated that March 15 is the day on which the historical speech was made by John F. Kennedy to the American Congress in 1962 where he upheld four basic rights of consumers. From the year 1983 onwards, WCRD is observed on this date to highlight the plight and status of consumers and to generate the awareness among masses. This year is the 30th anniversary of WCRD.

Speaking on the theme, George said consumer justice means just behaviour or treatment to consumers or in other words justice is the quality of being fair/reasonable. However, several products which are hazardous to health are sold in the market. Unfair trade practices, corporate wrong-doing, medical negligence, irresponsible lending by banks, mis-selling of financial products etc. are some of the main problems faced across the world. He further said that it should be 'Consumer Justice Right Now' because there is urgency in getting justice to consumers.

Other key speakers on the occasion were Ms. Ruth Anna, Programme Director, GIZ, Delhi; Dr. Poonam Pandey, Technical Expert, GIZ, New Delhi; Amrit Lal Saha, Chairman, Consumer Coordination Council; S. Saroja, CAG, Chennai and Dr. Keya Ghosh, Director, CUTS Kolkata Resource Centre.

Amrit Lal Saha demanded strengthening of consumer organisation like CUTS, which have proved its strength and efficiency. Ruth Anna highlighted the need of data in the digital age of communication and commerce.

Senior journalist Rajendra Prasad Bora said that collective action by the Government and consumer organisations is the key step towards ensuring consumer justice.

The seminar was attended by more than 75 consumer activists from all the districts of Rajasthan, who raised their concerns and suggestions. On this occasion, Dr. Lalit Mehra also distributed awards and certificates to Grassroots Reachout & Networking on Trade & Economics (GRANIRCA) district partners and some consumer activists for their active role in consumer protection in their respective areas. Dr Mehra also released CUTS Advocacy Document, a publication under GRANIRCA, which is a compilation of all advocacy issues for better protecting consumer's rights as emerging out of the three-year project.



CUTS CART

ACTIVITIES



Celebration of World Consumer Rights Day, March 15, 2013

Street Plays on the theme 'Consumer Justice Now'

On March 15, 2013, CUTS organised street plays at four public places located in four corners of Jaipur city. The purpose of conducting these street plays was to make people (general masses) aware of consumer rights and responsibilities and also to make them aware about the WCRD theme of this year through traditional and conventional styles like story based plays on the street with traditional trumpets, singing, dancing using musical instruments, etc. The four street places were conducted at Tonk Phatak at 9 am; at Amrapali Circle, Vaishali Nagar at 4 pm; at Space Cinema, Jhotwara Road and at Ramganj Chopar at 6.15 pm.



Awareness Event at School

On the same day i.e. March 15, 2013, CUTS, in collaboration with Consumer Coordination Council, New Delhi organised an educative event at the 'Rani Senior Secondary School' at Pratap Nagar, Sanganer, Jaipur, where the team interacted with school children and educated them on various consumer issues, rights, responsibilities and on the theme. On the occasion, school children were distributed various pamphlets and literature on consumer protection.

REPRESENTATION

- On January 5, 2013, George Cheriyan, Director attended a Seminar on Consumer Awareness organised by the Grand Kerala Shopping Festival (GKSF), in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala and the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India at Bolgatty Palace Hotel, Kochi, Kerala and made a presentation on Consumer Protection Act and Protection of Consumer Rights.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Project Officer delivered a lecture on consumer awareness in a NSS camp on January 8, 2013 at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Choti Chopar, Jaipur.
- On January 11, 2013, George Cheriyan, Director attended the meeting of the Standing Committee to 'harmonise labelling requirements on packaged commodities under different laws' at the Department of Consumer Affairs of Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs, Govt of India, Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi
- George Cheriyan, Director attended the meeting of the 'International Expert Group on Financial Services' of the Consumers International, held on January 31 and February 1, 2013 at CI's office in London. He provided inputs for finalisation of the report of the expert group and also provided feedback through the evaluation format.
- George Cheriyan, Director and Jai Shree Soni, Project Officer participated in various meetings of Consumers International, 'Consumers in the Information Society: Rights, Justice, Connection' on February 25, CUTS-CI Global Meeting on 'Review of United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP)' on February 26-27 and 'Regional Members Meeting' on February 28-March 01, 2013. Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS attended the inaugural session of the global meeting on February 26 and made a presentation on historical review of CI's work on UNGCP. Simi TB, Assistant Policy Analyst and Researcher also attended the global meeting for 'Review of UNGCP' on February 26-27, 2013.
- Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator and Amarjeet Singh, Programme Coordinator attended an event on 'Power Sector Reforms in Rajasthan: The Expectations, Achievements and Challenges and the Way Forward' organised by Prayas, Energy Group, Pune; Samta Power, Jaipur; The Institution of Engineers (India), Jaipur Chapter and RSEB retired *Abhiyanta evam Adhikari Jan Kalian Trust* on February 19-20, 2013 at Jaipur.
- Pradeep Singh Mehta, Secretary General along with George Cheriyan, Director & Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator visited, Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of Rajasthan on February 18, 2013 and met with Lalit Mehra, Principal Secretary, Consumer Affairs, Food and Civil Supplies to update him about CUTS work on consumer education and protection, and also to invite him for the WCRD event.
- Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator attended National Seminar cum Consultation on Mediation in Consumer Disputes organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) at New Delhi on March 07, 2013.
- Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator attended an event on World Consumer Rights Day organised by Department of Consumer Affairs, Rajasthan at *Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj & Gramin Vikas Sansthan*, Jaipur on March 15, 2013.



Highway Speed to be Regulated

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways CP Joshi announced that from April the speed of commercial vehicles on national highways would be regulated to reduce accidents. He also stated that toll on the Mumbai-Baroda national highway would be collected electronically.

Responding to queries on Google Plus Hangout, Dr. Joshi said that the Radio Frequency Identification Device (RFID) would be standardised to ensure interoperability of the systems adopted by all the concessionaires.

The Ministry hoped to introduce electronic toll collection at all toll plazas across the country by 2014 to ensure seamless travel, thereby helping drivers and commuters not only to save time but also prevent fatigue, which is considered one of the major causes of accidents.

Dr. Joshi said the Government intended to control the speed of commercial vehicles on national highways to reduce accidents and the high rate of fatalities. Automobile manufacturers would be asked to limit the speed through an order.

To make cargo transportation transparent, details would have to be uploaded online. A new software was being developed to do away with the harassment faced by transporters at the hands of police and officials, besides ensuring that no objectionable goods are transported, Joshi said.

Accepting a suggestion, the Minister said he would seek to link *Aadhaar* numbers to the issuance of driving licence as part of the exercise to make the norms stringent and prevent any non-Indian from obtaining licenses.

While schools would be set up to impart driving skills, Dr. Joshi said the project would be taken up under the public private partnership (PPP) mode. He hoped auto manufacturers would come forward to utilise their corporate social responsibility fund for the purpose.

He assured the participants that the government was committed to taking effective steps to ensure safety of commuters and promised to set up a toll free helpline to receive suggestions for improving the set-up.

(The Hindu, 30.03.13)

Reebok Asked to Pay ₹7,999 for Damaged Shoes

Reebok India Limited has been directed by a consumer forum here to pay ₹7,999 compensation to a customer for not repairing or replacing a pair of shoes which got damaged within three months of purchase.

The New Delhi District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum passed the order relying on the unopposed allegations of the customer as neither Reebok nor its authorised retail shop chose to contest his claims despite notices sent to them. "The allegations made by complainant remained un rebutted because opposite parties (Reebok and its retail shop) did not choose to contest the claim despite registered notices. We have no other option but to believe the allegations made by the complainant."

"Within three months (of purchase), the shoes got damaged and opposite parties neither replaced nor repaired the said shoes. There is deficiency on the part of opposite parties," a bench presided by C K Chaturvedi said.

The forum directed Reebok to pay ₹4,999 to Delhi resident Ramanand Sharma as refund of the shoes' cost and ordered the retail shop to pay him ₹3,000 as compensation.

Sharma, in his complaint, had alleged that when he had bought the shoes on October 28, 2010, the retail shop had assured him about the quality and durability of the pair.

The shoes got damaged within 90 days of purchase, but neither the retailer nor the company repaired or replaced the footwear, Sharma alleged.

The forum proceeded *ex-parte* against Reebok and its retail shop as no one appeared on their behalf despite the notices served to them.

(Press Trust of India, 31.03.13)

Now, a 'Moneylender-Free' Village

The display of 'litter-free zone' boards across various parts of a city may not be unusual. But one that states that the area is 'moneylender free' definitely is.

Canara Bank has taken this bold move by declaring Kunjupannai village in Nilgiris district a 'moneylender free' village. The village is located about 20 km off Mettupalayam on the way to Kotagiri.

The bank's General Manager for Coimbatore Circle U. Ramesh Kumar told *Business Line* that they had adopted this tribal village, which houses around 350 families.

Recently, the bank set up an ultra-small branch in the village and appointed a business correspondent to take care of the day-to-day functions.

The bank, in the first phase, has extended credit to around 90 people. "The advance was only to swap their debt, and the maximum loan per individual did not exceed ₹20,000.

(The Hindu Business Line, 22.03.13)



Apex Consumer Forum Slams 'Non-Speaking' Orders from Rajasthan

The apex consumer forum today expressed displeasure with Rajasthan State Consumer Commission for "continuing" to pass "non-speaking orders" despite its directions to give reasoned decisions.

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) also observed that the state commission's decision to not comply with order of the superior fora "amounts to impertinence" and "violates judicial discipline".

"Rajasthan State Commission has been passing non-speaking orders. We have set aside at least 100 such orders and remitted the cases to the state commission to pass reasoned orders. In spite of this, the state commission has chosen to pass the impugned order. It continues to pass non-speaking orders, the National Commission said.

"Being the court of subordinate jurisdiction, it was incumbent upon the state commission to comply with the order of the superior court and pass a speaking order. The order passed by the state commission amounts to impertinence as it violates the judicial discipline requiring the subordinate court to comply with the order of the superior court," a bench presided by Justice Ashok Bhan said.

The apex consumer commission's observations came while setting aside the state fora's order upholding a district forum's decision on making Terex Vectra Equipment Pvt Ltd liable to either refund the cost of a defective vehicle or replace it.

The district forum's order had come on the complaint of Meharchand, native of Alwar district of Rajasthan, who had alleged that the vehicle he bought from Terex Vectra had manufacturing defects and had been lying idle at his residence ever since its purchase.

(Press Trust of India, 09.01.13)

Will the New Grievance Redress Bill be as RTI-2

Providing a big relief to the common man, the Union Cabinet on March 07, 2013 approved a bill providing for time-bound delivery of services like pensions, passports, caste certificates, ration cards and tax refunds etc.

The Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill also comes with a penalty of ₹250 a day subject to a maximum of ₹50,000 for default.

The Right of Citizens for Time-Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of Grievances Bill will be enacted under the concurrent list, which means all states will now have to offer the entire gamut of services listed by the Centre's Citizen's Charter, once the bill is approved by the Parliament and signed by the President.

Although many states offer time-bound delivery of certain services, the list is not as exhaustive as conceived by the Centre.

Provisions of the bill allow a state or central grievance redressal commission to refer a case for criminal investigation or inquiry by Lokpal if the panel concludes there is evidence of corruption in delayed dispensation of services.

Public authorities required to provide services include constitutional and statutory bodies, public-private partnerships, notified entities, government-funded NGOs, government companies and private firms offering services outsourced by the Government.

The bill introduced with much fanfare in December, 2011 as a counter measure to the Anna Hazare's movement is one of the key measures of the UPA to provide better governance.

Government sources believe that the bill on delivery of services promises a more tangible sense of empowerment than a Lokpal Bill as it deals with every day corruption and red tape that fuelled public support.

(Indian Express, 07.03.13)

New Arrivals

1. Stickers depicting various consumer awareness related slogans
2. Advocacy Document

The collage includes several consumer awareness materials:

- Stickers:**
 - उपभोक्ता कानून का ज्ञान आपकी समस्याओं का समाधान** (Knowledge of Consumer Law is the solution to your problems)
 - फुटकर विक्रेता: सावधान!** (Informal Seller: Beware!)
 - हर चमकने वाली चीज सोना नहीं होती** (Not everything that shines is gold)
 - सही चुनाव उज्जवल भविष्य के लिए** (Right choice for a bright future)
- Advocacy Document:**
 - Consumer Protection in Rajasthan**
 - Issues to be Advocated:**
 - Consumer Protection Act, 1930
 - Consumer Protection Act, 1986
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2019
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2020
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2021
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2022
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2023
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2024
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2025
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2026
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2027
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2028
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2029
 - Consumer Protection Act, 2030



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