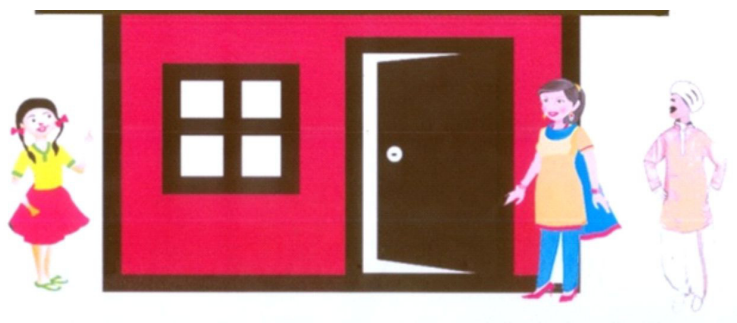


Consumer Dialogue

Volume VI, Issue 3, July-October 2015

E-newsletter

Grahak Suvidha Kendra Launched in Jaipur



The Department of Consumer Affairs of Government of India sponsored *Grahak Suvidha Kendra* (GSK) was formally launched in the auspicious presence of eminent guests like Justice V S Dave, former High Court Judge and x-President, Rajasthan State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission; Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General CUTS, Anant Sharma, President Consumer Action and Network Society (CANS) and Sanjay Jhala, Deputy Director, Consumer Affairs, Government of Rajasthan at Jaipur on September 15, 2015.

Welcoming the speakers and the participants, George Cheriyan, Director CUTS elucidated the motto behind the introduction of GSK. Cheriyan said that the Government's aim is to empower the



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consumers, hence, to provide more and more options to the aggrieved consumers, in order to give speedy and timely resolution of disputes related to consumer issues. He said that the objective of GSK is to inform the consumers about their rights, give advice, provide pre-purchase or post purchase counseling, offer direct assistance to resolve their complaints and to redirect the consumers to appropriate body, if are not able to resolve their grievances. Deepak Saxena Sr. Programme Coordinator gave a comprehensive presentation on the GSK and its functioning. These GSK centers will work on mainly four principles: information, advice, advocacy and complaints handling.

George Cheriyan also shared that there is a need of integrated efforts from both government and farmers side for promoting organic farming in Rajasthan. He also added that the Government should concentrate on consumer oriented approach rather than export oriented approach for organic products.

Justice V S Dave in his key note address said that it is a wise decision on part of the Government and definitely these GSKs will be able to protect the interests of the consumers. Dave said that such platforms will be in a position to give directions and easy access to the consumers for getting their complaints redressed.

Pradeep S Mehta in his opening address said that CUTS has been fighting for the rights of consumers since 1983 and has been at the forefront for protection of these rights. He said that CUTS has been

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successful in achieving these goals with the help of tools like 'Consumer Advocacy', which has also contributed in creating awareness among the consumers.

CANS President Anant Sharma stated that any legislation, scheme or project cannot be called successful until and unless it reaches to the lower strata of the society because these are the people, who need protection more than the upper class of society.

Sanjay Jhala, Deputy Director Consumer Affairs, Government of Rajasthan highlighted the commitment of the Government for better implementation of the Consumer Protection Act and its support to any scheme for protection of interest of the consumers.

In the event, representatives of Non-government Organisations (NGOs), Voluntary Consumer Organisations (VCOs), service providers of telecom, electricity and other consumer services, regulators and other stakeholders were present in adequate number.

GSK details can be accessed at:

http://www.cuts-international.org/CART/Grahak_Suvidha_Kendra.htm and also

Be a part of GSK family:

<https://www.facebook.com/Grahak-Suvidha-Kendra-GSK-Jaipur-1459230614407574/?fref=ts>

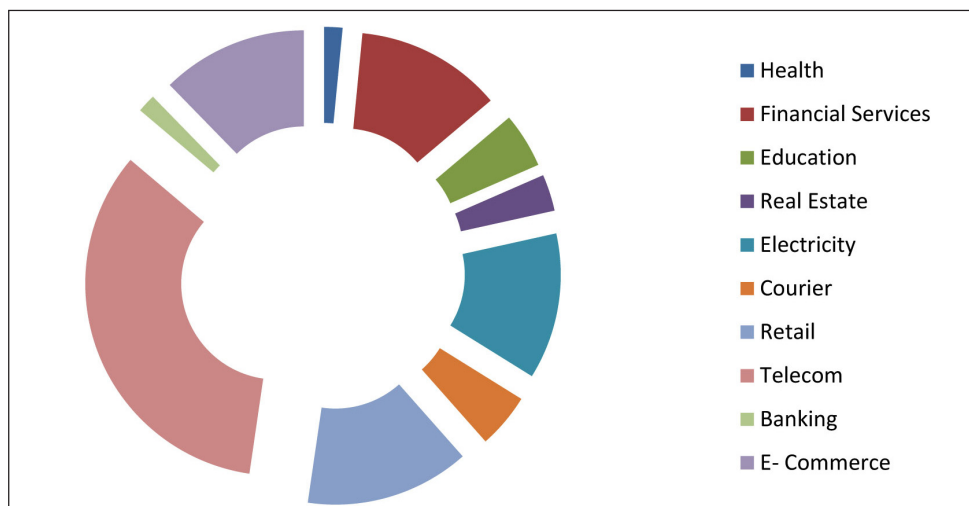
Other Useful Links:

For online submission of consumer complaints at Indian Institute of Public Administration web portal
www.consumeradvice.in

For online submission of consumer complaints against misleading advertisements, Ministry of Consumer affairs of Government of India has web portal, the link of which is:

<http://gama.gov.in/Default.aspx>

Complaint Analysis of GSK, Jaipur (July-October 2015)



Less Production and Unavailability: A Hindrance in Organic Farming, Opines CUTS

Despite the Government's constant efforts to promote organic farming, only 16.3 percent farmers of Rajasthan use organic inputs, while fear of less production and unavailability of organic inputs were found to be the major hindrances to the chemical farming.

At least 97.6 percent of farmers of the State are aware about the hazards caused by chemical-based farming inputs but the 'fear of less production, transition period and unavailability of organic inputs' in the market discourage them to switch to organic farming.

The study also noted that 95.5 percent consumers are also aware of ill effects of chemical-based agricultural products, while 88.6 percent consumers felt that organic products are better than chemical ones. The key findings were part of end line survey and these were shared in a state-level advocacy



cum dissemination meeting held on October 28, 2015 in Jaipur under its project 'ProOrganic', being implemented with the support of Sweden-based Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) with an object to gauge the level of awareness among consumers and farmer on organic farming and the usage of organic products.

The study was carried out in 102 *gram panchayats* from 51 blocks in selected six districts of Rajasthan, namely, Kota, Pratapgarh, Udaipur, Jaipur, Dausa and Chittorgarh. Around of 3122 samples of feedback were collected. Out of the total samples, 1605 comprised farmer respondents while 1517 belonged to the consumers.

In the dissemination meeting, speaking on the findings of CUTS Study, Shital Prasad Sharma, Director, State Institute of Agriculture Management (SIAM), Government of Rajasthan focussed on the need of development of climate-smart villages in Rajasthan to promote organic farming. A K Gupta, Professor and Head, Department of Agronomy, Sri Karan Narendra Agriculture University, Jobner pointed out that organic farming is the process by which both consumers and producers could be benefited. S Mukherjee, Professor and Head, Department of Horticulture, Rajasthan Agricultural Research Institute (RARI), Government of Rajasthan stressed on the need of creation of organic product hubs for domestic and export purposes. Verdhman Bapna, Director, Morarka Foundation demanded the need of establishment of organic vegetable shops at the *Gram Panchayat* level.

Deepak Saxena, Sr. Programme Coordinator presented project activities being implemented over past two years, while Ram Kumar Jha, Policy Analyst presented result of end line report and emphasised on market value chain linkages for better farm value. Meeting was attended by more than 80 participants including representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), educational and research institutes, universities and the media.

Prior to this meeting, there was a partner's meeting held on 27th October, 2015, where all the district partners and the project team discussed the progress and development under the project over last two year's period and the future activities and their strategies for future.

For more details:

http://www.ptinews.com/news/6672634_Study-highlights-key-hindrances-to-organic-farming.html

<http://www.freepressjournal.in/study-highlights-key-hindrances-to-organic-farming/>

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/study-highlights-key-hindrances-to-organic-farming-115102900548_1.html

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/science/Study-highlights-key-hindrances-to-organic-farming/articleshow/49580532.cms>

<http://newsgrey.com/story.php?storyid=study-highlights-key-hindrances-to-organic-farming>

<http://food.ndtv.com/food-drinks/the-problems-facing-organic-farming-in-india-study-1237807>

http://article.wn.com/view/2015/10/29/Study_highlights_key_hindrances_to_organic_farming/

<http://www.newslocker.com/en-in/news/india-digital-news/study-highlights-key-hindrances-to-organic-farming/view/>

http://zeenews.india.com/news/science/study-highlights-key-hindrances-to-organic-farming_1815940.html

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Gram Gadar Award Distributed

Surendra Chirana, a rural journalist was awarded with the *Gram Gadar* award for best journalism at the rural-level for the year 2014 during an event to mark the launch of *Grahak Suvudha Kendra* on 15.09.15 at Jaipur. The award was given by Justice V S Dave.



Green Action Week (GAW) Campaign 2015

Like every year, in the month of September, 2015, SSNC, Sweden supported GAW activities were organised, which included ten cottage meetings, equal number of street plays, signature campaign and stakeholders consultation. The GAW mainly focussed on imparting awareness on organic consumption organised in ten different localities of Jaipur targeting urban consumers. In each of these meetings, consumers were made aware of the importance of consuming organic food. They were also informed about the simple technique of growing organic kitchen garden through the medium of tray cultivation. Total around 600 urban consumers participated in all the ten meetings. Similarly, a total number of ten street plays were also organised side by side at various market places to reach out to a wider audience in an attempt to modify consumer behaviour in favour of organic products. For conducting



the plays, *Ras Rang Manch*, a Jaipur-based street play group was given the responsibility. In addition to this, a signature campaign was organised.

Besides, a survey of 150 samples was conducted to gauge about the awareness, accessibility and the willingness to pay for organic food among the urban consumers of Jaipur. It was conducted in the cottage meetings. To mark the conclusion of the Green

Action Week Campaign, a State Level Stakeholder Consultation on the theme 'Organic Food and Farming for All' was organised on September 30, 2015 at Hotel Jaipur Palace, Jaipur. The aim of the consultation was to advocate for a shift in policy towards organic consumption and production. More than 70 representatives from civil society/consumer organisations, farmers' group, media and government departments participated in the consultation. As speakers, A K Gupta (Rajasthan Agricultural Research Institute); S R Sharma (SKNAU) and S S Rathore from *Krishi Vigyan Kendra* participated in the consultation. Cheriyan made the opening address and Varidhi Singh, Project Officer made a presentation on the highlights of the campaign and the key findings of the survey.

About Half of Online-Shoppers Ignorant about the Ultimate Seller Consumer Perception Survey

Online shopping has become a global phenomenon. In India too, we see its adoption growing by leaps and bounds. In order to understand the shopping behaviour of the consumers, CUTS with the support of Retailers Association of India (RAI), Mumbai, recently conducted a survey on the Consumer Buying Experiences in three metros viz. Chennai, Kolkata and Jaipur. The survey sample size included 90 consumers with equal men to women ratio.

It was found that as many as 84 percent consumers shopped from both online sources and offline marketplaces while just 4 percent consumers shopped everything through online means. About 11 percent consumers preferred shopping only offline.

About 62 percent respondents came to know of the online portals they shopped through advertisements, 37 percent through said sources and 11 percent from other sources.

The respondents cited easy access and availability of the variety and special discounted rates as the main reasons for shopping online were; convenience of shopping from indoors, not wandering here and there, avoiding traffic and rush, and for saving of time and energy. Consumers also think that the ease of doing shopping, transactions, returns and cash on delivery and cash back option facility were the motivating factors that contributed in shopping online. Besides, product reviews and full information about the products in case of electronics were some of the other motivating factors.

About 63 percent respondents shopping online were aware of the difference between online marketplace and online retailer. However, almost 47 percent of them did not know the actual seller. It was also found that about 48 percent of the respondents shopping online were facing problems related to customer services. Also, around 48 percent of the respondents expected e-commerce portal from where they were buying to bear the accountability of after sales service.



Consultation on Power Sector Reforms with RERC Chairman

A consultation of CSOs with the Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission (RERC) Chairman was organised on power sector reforms on July 15, 2015 at CUTS Conference Hall, Jaipur. Around 20 CSOs from Jaipur and other districts took part in the consultation and interacted with Vishwanath Hiremath, Chairman of RERC. The consultation was woven around the ways to utilise the fund, which RERC has allocated to discoms for consumer education. Many ideas and suggestions came out the discussion, which will further be shared with RERC. In addition, several issues, such as lack of awareness, grievance redressal mechanism, consumer advocates etc. were also discussed in detail.

National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) 2014-15

After the post proposal workshop, all partner organisations are now involved in the implementation of activities, both awareness and action on the ground and are thus in the process to wind up the activities of 2014-15.



Road Safety Campaign Reaches Grassroots

The Department of Road Transport of Government of Rajasthan initiated a drive on road safety from September 28 to October 02, 2015 in the entire State. The campaign was covered not only the urban geography of the State but also reached the rural Rajasthan. CUTS being an important stakeholder in the road safety issues too played an important role and conducted meetings and street plays in and around Chittorgarh district.

- Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator of CUTS attended a training scheduled by the survey agency Partners in Development on July 27-28, 2015 at Udaipur and on July 29, 2015 at Jaipur. The agency is engaged in end line survey under ProOrganic project.
- Deepak Saxena, Sr. Programme Coordinator, Gajendra Khichi and Dharmendra Chaturvedi (Project Officers) of CUTS attended a training programme for coordinators and counsellors of GSKs and State Consumer Helplines organised by Centre for Consumer Studies (CCS) at Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi from August 24-26, 2015.
- George Cheriyan along with Madhusudan Sharma, Amarjeet Singh and Amardeep Singh of CUTS attended a session on 'India's Foreign Trade Policy' by C Raja Mohan at CUTS Jaipur on August 01, 2015.
- Deepak Saxena represented CUTS in the West Zone regional meeting of Comptroller and Auditor Generals and Service Providers of telecom conducted by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on August 07, 2015 at Udaipur.
- George Cheriyan and Gajendra Khichi attended conference on Indian Financial Code conducted by Ashish Aggarwal and Bhargavi Zaveri from National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) on July 21, 2015.
- George Cheriyan attended the National Convention organised by Consumer Coordination Council in Hyderabad on September 26, 2015.
- Gajendra Khichi participated in Customer Outreach Programmes organised by Idea Cellular Limited on September 03, 2015 and on September 27, 2015 organised by MTS (Mobile Telecom Service) both at Jaipur and in an Open House organised by TRAI, Jaipur on September 09, 2015 at Banswara. Dharmendra attended Bhartiya Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) open house programme on October 05, 2015 at Mansrovar, Jaipur.
- Ram Kumar Jha attended a Conference on 'Increasing Access to Reliable and Affordable Solar Products in Rural Rajasthan' organised by International Finance Corporation (IFC) on September 14, 2015 at Jaipur.
- Deepak Saxena attended a programme organised by GIZ, New Delhi on 'Strengthening Consumer Policy in India through Assessing Consumer Detriment' on September 29, 2015. The meeting was attended by number of prominent Voluntary Consumer Organisations from all over India.
- George Cheriyan visited Stockholm, Sweden from October 05-09, 2015 mainly for the strategy planning meeting of SSNC.
- George Cheriyan attended 15th Meeting of the Central Advisory Committee of Food Safety Standards Authority of India on October 13, 2015 at New Delhi.
- Deepak Saxena along with Gajendra and Dharmendra attended World Standards Day celebration organised by BIS, Jaipur on October 17, 2015 at Jaipur.

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Good Samaritan Law Guidelines in Place but Implementation Remains a Challenge

Over one lakh people die every year due to road accidents on Indian roads. Most road accident victims die because they are not taken to hospitals on time. Bystanders shy away from taking the victims for treatment due to various reasons.

Following a Supreme Court order in 2014, the Central Government has issued guidelines, which offer some protection to a person, who takes an accident victim to hospital.

The guideline notification is available at: <http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2015/164095.pdf>

For more details read: <http://www.ibnlive.com/news/india/need-for-a-good-samaritan-law-to-encourage-bystanders-to-help-road-accident-victims-1021480.html>

FSSAI in Action: Safety Norms to Regulate Food and Health Supplements

Food safety regulator FSSAI has come out with quality and safety norms to regulate food or health supplements, nutraceuticals, functional and dietary foods and has sought public comments on the same. At present, India does not have any kind of regulatory guidelines for approval and monitoring of such products.

The official notification of these norms will check counterfeit products and encourage stakeholders to invest in this fast-growing industry. The norms will come into effect from the ensuing January 2016. (PTI, 24.07.15)

Read more at:

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/48200195.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst



Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs Sought Class Action Suit

Country's apex consumer grievance redressal commission NCDRC on Monday admitted complaint of consumer affairs ministry against Food major Nestle India. The Consumer Affairs Ministry has sought class action against the company for adopting unfair and deceptive trade practice and misleading advertisement to sell Maggi noodles.

The Ministry has also sought Rs640 crore for loss from Nestle India. The National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission has accepted the suit from the Ministry.

Details at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Apex-consumer-court-accepts-Rs-640cr-suit-against-Maggi/articleshow/48511523.cms?>

Ban on Junk Food within 200 Metres of Schools Arena

Taking into consideration rising childhood obesity, diabetes and hypertension, an expert committee set up by Ministry of Women and Child Development of Government of India has recommended ban on the sale of junk food in school canteens in its report submitted to the Ministry recently. The committee also suggested forbidding the sales of junk foods within 200 metres of school arena during school hours by vendors and by shops and in the restaurants to school children in uniform.

The committee, chaired by T Longvah, Director-in-charge, National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, was asked to look into the issues related to growing problems of obesity in children and its relationship with consumption of junk food. In its report, the committee expressed its concern on rising childhood obesity, diabetes and hypertension and reviewed how junk food is regulated across several countries and the available legislative and institutional frameworks in India.

The committee also suggested not permitting sale of junk foods within 200 meters of the school during school hours by vendors and by shops and at restaurants to children in school uniform. It further suggested a list of desirable food items to be offered in school canteens. The report recommends on establishment and management of school canteens, modifications required in the labelling of pre-packaged foods and the need for promotion campaigns to be undertaken by several stakeholder ministries. It suggests inclusion of nutrition related aspects in the school health card and renaming the School Health Programme to School Health and Nutrition Programme. (TNN 27.08.15)



Payment Banks: Banking Revolution on Cards

Banking, as we have known it, appears headed for an upheaval. The Reserve Bank of India 'in principle' has cleared 11 entities including department of posts, top conglomerates, such as Reliance Industries and Aditya Birla Group, telecom giants like Airtel and Vodafone and a number of technical and finance companies to set up 'payments banks'. Unlike 'universal banks' as the regular banks are called payment banks can accept deposits up to only Rs1 lakh and cannot grant loans. They can only deposit their money in government bonds. They can issue debit cards but not credit cards. Other than this, they can provide all the services of a universal bank.

For more details: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/Banking-revolution-on-cards-RBI-clears-11-payments-banks/articleshow/48549144.cms>

ASCI Harsh on Misleading Advertisements

It is very common to find an advertisement on the Television making highly exaggerated and ambiguous claims about the product. When some big brands make a claim in their ads, many of us do tend to believe them and this is exactly what some of them wish to exploit.

The Consumer Complaints Council (CCC), under the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has banned 82 advertisements out of 148 complaints, it received across segments during June 2015. Out of 148 advertisements against which complaints were upheld, 26 belonged to the Personal and Healthcare category, followed by 22 advertisements in the Education category, nine advertisements in Food and Beverage category, seven advertisements in media and entertainment category and 18 advertisements from other categories.

For more details: <http://thehinduindian.com/news/asci-bans-82-ads-including-loreal-amity-flipkart-india-today-for-misrepresentations/>



Online Submission of RTI Application to Start Soon in Rajasthan



Aiming to simplify the process of filing Right to Information queries and assure transparency in the system, Rajasthan Information Commissioner informed that people in the State will soon be able to seek information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act online.

For more information: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Online-information-under-RTI-Act-soon-in-Rajasthan/articleshow/49371399.cms>

NEWS FLASH



Aamir Khan to be the Face of the Road Safety Drive

Taking an example from the success of pulse polio campaign by the popular Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan, Union Minister of Road, Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari is planning to rope in another actor Aamir Khan for piloting its road safety awareness programme.

For details: http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/aamir-khan-to-be-the-face-of-road-safety-drive-115100600062_1.html



National Campaign for Making Street Food Safe

How safe is your roadside food vada pao or gol gappa? To create nationwide awareness, a safe food campaign, 'Surakshit Khadya Abhiyan', has been launched by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in partnership with National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), Voluntary Organisation in Interest of Consumer Education (VOICE), and Cargill India.

At a time when food safety became a burning issue and with the methods followed by the vendors being 'very individualistic', NASVI believes that the campaign will create a stable eco-system for sharing best practices on safe food.

For details: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/national-campaign-on-to-make-street-food-safe/article7731273.ece>

Pesticide Level in Food Samples Situation Alarming

There has been an almost two-fold increase in the number of vegetables, fruits, meat and spices samples containing pesticides above the permitted level in the past six years, suggests a report by the Union Ministry of Agriculture.

The report caught attention of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which has taken suo motu cognisance of the matter, pointing out that any food article injurious to public health is a potential danger to the fundamental Right to life.



For details: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/nhrc-alarmed-over-pesticide-levels-in-food-samples/article7748373.ece>

On a related note, samples collected from organic outlets were also found having residues of pesticides. Residues of unapproved pesticides were found in 12.50 percent of the 20,618 samples collected nationally as part of the central scheme 'Monitoring of Pesticide Residues', which was launched in 2005.

For details: <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/504077/govt-test-shows-125-food.html>

RERC Slams Discoms over Defective Meters in Rajasthan

Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission (RERC) has commented strongly on the defective meters of the State discoms. RERC has stated in its recent order that the discoms should take note of the large number of defective meters, which adversely affected their revenue. It is duty of discoms towards consumers that their supply is correctly metered and revenue recovered for the electricity supplied. In all the three discoms, the number of defective single phase meters in domestic and non-domestic category was 8,07,121 and defective three phase meters were 7,708.

For details: http://dnasyndication.com/dna/City-Jaipur/dna_english_news_and_features/RERC-slams-discoms-over-defective-meters-in-state/DNJAI62369

ASCI Looks to Broaden Ties with the Government

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is likely to soon sign agreements with the Union Health Ministry and the TRAI, seeking to expand its role. It had recently signed a memorandum of agreement with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, allowing it to directly process complaints received by the latter on misleading advertisements. The advertisement regulator is also a partner of the Union department of consumer affairs, acting on allegedly misleading ads received by the latter, on a website promoted for the purpose.

For details: http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/asci-looks-to-broaden-ties-with-government-115102200468_1.html

Safety Norms in Two-Wheelers

Two-wheelers and all other types of vehicles are set to get two new safety features to reduce the road fatalities. Bikes and scooters will need to have the automatic headlamp like that of Daytime Running Lamps in cars, from April 2017. The Road Transport Ministry is also working on a plan to fit a sound device that can make the passer-by and people around the site where the accidents take place alert.

For details: http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/49437409.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst



Upcoming Activities

- External Evaluation of 'ProOrganic' Project in the first week of December 2015.
- Start of National Level Perception Survey on Consumer Safety under ConsumersUp II.
- First Advisory Committee Meeting under GSK in second week of December, 2015.
- Summing Up National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) Activities of 2014-15.
- Green Action Week Partners' Meeting in Brasilia, Brazil from November 15-17, 2015
- Consumer International World Congress in Brasilia, Brazil from November 18-20, 2015
- Consumer International General Assembly in Brasilia, Brazil on November 21, 2015



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