

Create a Separate Department for Consumer Affairs
CUTS Memo to Rajasthan Chief Minister during Pre-budget Consultation

Jaipur, February 20, 2013

In a memo to the Rajasthan Chief Minister, during the pre-budget consultation with NGOs held on Feb. 19, 2013, CUTS raised the need for separate department for Consumer Affairs in the state of Rajasthan for better coordination of matters related to consumers, and additional allocation of funds for intensive consumer awareness campaign and for strengthening the consumer protection mechanism in the state. George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS raised these matters during the pre-budget consultation and submitted the memorandum to the Chief Minister. Madhu Sudan Sharma, Project Coordinator, CUTS, also attended the consultation.

Presently ‘consumer affairs’ is part of department of ‘Food & Civil Supplies’ in the state. Food and Civil supplies itself being an important subject, consumer affairs is not getting the required attention. ‘Weights and Measures’ is part of department of industry and ‘food safety and standards’ is part of department of health. In addition, there are various sections/agencies related to consumers which work in their own close sections without any coordination with other agencies. So there is need for a separate department of Consumer Affairs to coordinate the functioning of all agencies/department mandated to protect interests of consumers. States like Kerala and West Bengal is already having separate department for consumer affairs like at the Central. Hence CUTS requested for the announcement of the same in the budget speech.

As per the ‘State of Indian Consumer Report 2012’, Rajasthan is at the 18th rank out of total 22 states and union territories in term of consumer awareness. Even after 25 years of enactment of the act, only 11 percentage of people have heard about the consumer protection law and only 16 percentage is aware about the consumer rights in Rajasthan. Hence there is a need for intensive consumer awareness campaign in the state. CUTS requested for substantial allocation of funds for consumer education and protection.

Re-constitution of State Consumer Protection Council, setting up Rajasthan Municipal Regulatory Commission (RMRC), to regulate all municipal corporations and councils in the state, with the aim to improve the quality of civic services by making civic bodies accountable to an independent commission, sufficient allocation for State Information Commission and for popularizing other progressive laws etc. are the other issues raised in CUTS memo to the Chief Minister.

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