

# Consumer Dialogue

Volume XIII, Issue 1, January-April, 2022

E-newsletter

## Slow and Gradual Transition to Organic Farming Will Ensure Chemical-Free Farming in Rajasthan

Sustained growth is key to India's future, for which a reduction in chemical farming and a move from chemical to organic farming are challenging. To this end, we all need to become champions of reform and reduce the amount of chemical farming by moving towards organic farming. This was pointed out by Padma Shri award-winning farmer Jagdish Pareek. He added that Rajasthan, a state suffering from water shortages, needs technology and a traditional strategy to achieve our target without financial loss.

Pareek spoke as chief guest at the launch of a project named "Developing a Culture of Sustainable Consumption and Lifestyle Through Promoting Organic Consumption and Production and Adopting Sustainable Consumption Practices by Engaging Consumers in the State of Rajasthan, India" (ProScop). This project is being implemented in twelve targeted districts and all seven divisions of Rajasthan for five years (2022-2026).



In his opening remarks, George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International, said that we should not think of shifting from conventional to organic farming overnight. He added that India ranks fifth (Australia 1<sup>st</sup>) in the area under organic certification and 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of the total number of producers. Cheriyan also highlighted that Madhya Pradesh has covered the largest area under organic certification, and Rajasthan earned the 2<sup>nd</sup> position, with 12 percent of the total organic certified land in the country. In the end, Cheriyan added, organic farming is a time-consuming process. There are several challenges, but we all need to move slowly and gradually and will achieve our target without facing any crisis issues.

Hanuman Mal Dhaka, Additional Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, highlighted the adverse effects of chemicals that farmers in farming use. Dhaka spoke explicitly about product demand and supply, stating that we need to raise public awareness about the hazardous effects of chemical products so that people recognise the value of organic items.

Organic farming can be a way to protect the climate, environment, and water, said A S Baloda, Director, Rajasthan Agriculture Research Institute (RARI). On a similar note, he emphasised the need for farmers to perform honestly in organic farming. Surendra Awana, a progressive farmer, spoke about innovative ways of farming and divergent practical methods that are helping farmers to take new initiatives to move towards organic farming.

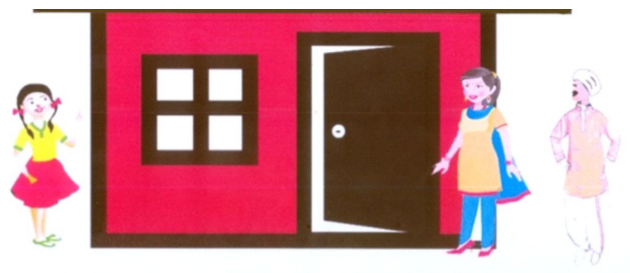
### INSIDE

- ACTIVITIES
- IMPORTANT NEWS/ARTICLES
- REPRESENTATION/ VISITS
- UPCOMING ACTIVITIES
- SOCIAL NETWORK

**CUTS**<sup>®</sup>  
International



CUTS CART



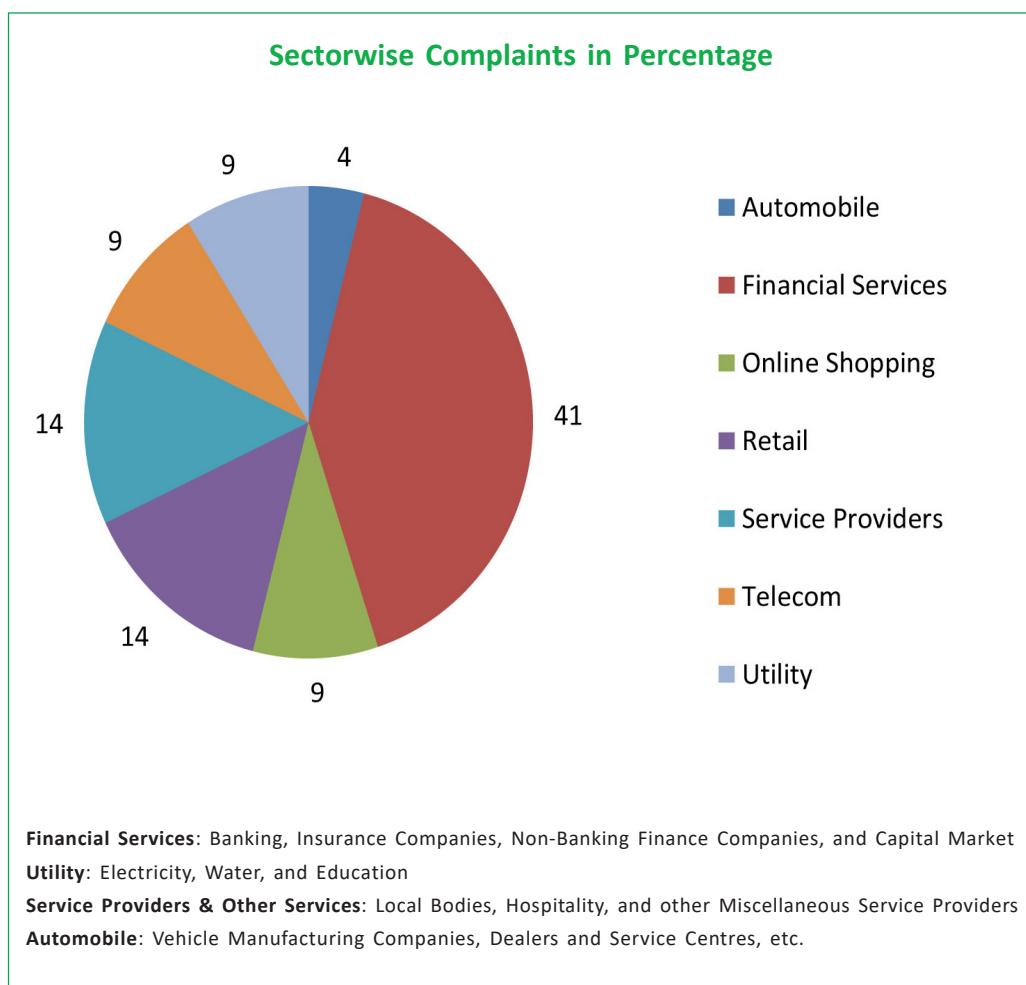
## Grahak Sahayta Kendra, Jaipur

Grahak Sahayta Kendra (GSK) provides services, such as advice on consumer protection-related issues, addresses complaints, and publishes books, pamphlets, magazines, and other relevant materials in consumer-related matters. Besides, the GSK centre also handles consumer complaints through counselling and conciliation for quick and easy redress.

**GSK details can be accessed at:**

<https://cuts-cart.org/consumer-care-centre-grahak-sahayta-kendra/>

From January-April, 2022, the status of complaints and advisories received at GSK are shown in the below graph below:



## CUTS Nominated to the Traffic Management Committee of Rajasthan

In Rajasthan, traffic management is becoming complex and challenging since the traffic volume is increasing and space on roads for traffic and vulnerable road users is shrinking year by year. As a result, in 2020, 9667 people died, and 16798 were injured in 19550 road accidents, as per the NCRB report. To address the menace of traffic mismanagement and ensure road safety, the Government of Rajasthan is taking appropriate measures from time to time. Recently the name of the Transport Department has been changed to Transport and Road Safety Department. George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS, who will be representing CUTS in the Committee, opined that the Government of Rajasthan had nominated CUTS as a Civil Society member to this committee for the next year.

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8z3k6t>

### IMPORTANT NEWS/ARTICLES



## Noise Pollution from Vehicle Horns & Modified Exhausts

The National Green Tribunal, Bhopal Bench, has asked the Rajasthan government to comply and follow the guidelines for the prevention of noise pollution issued by its Principal Bench, the Supreme Court and the Central Pollution Control Board. The direction was made in an application filed by CUTS regarding rampant noise pollution in the State, which majorly emanates from vehicles either through incessant use of horns or modified exhausts.

(LiveLaw.in, January 25, 2022) <https://snip.ly/kab4c4>

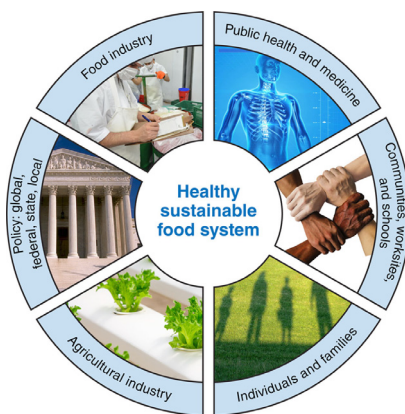


## Why Food Industries Must Promote Healthy and Sustainable Diets

By George Cheriyan and Simi T.B

Even well before the pandemic, food systems within a huge developing country like India faced enormous challenges in achieving equitable access to healthy, nutritious, sustainable and balanced diets for all. Now, COVID-19 has further pushed the country behind in reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has caused widespread loss of livelihoods and incomes, threatening the food security, health, and nutrition of poor and marginalised people. This can be corroborated by the latest Global Hunger Index Report, where India has slipped to 101st position of 116 countries from its 94<sup>th</sup> position in 2020.

<https://cuts-cart.org/why-food-industries-must-promote-healthy-and-sustainable-diets/>



## Earth Day 2022: India Must Invest in Effective Enforcement of Environment Laws

By Pradeep S Mehta

The 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the biennial Environment Performance Index (EPI Index 2020) released by the Yale University ranked India at 168th position among 180 countries in terms of environmental performance. In 2018, the country's rank was 177 with a score of 30.57 out of 100. India scored 27.6 out of 100 in the 2020 index. Such poor ranking is despite the country making many advancements in environmental law, which have flowed from the provisions of the Constitution that require the state and the citizens to protect the environment.

The right to life, guaranteed in the Constitution, includes the right to a healthy environment. When India established the National Green Tribunals in 2010, it became the third country in the world after Australia and New Zealand to have a specialised forum for disposal of cases pertaining to environment. Yet, we are far behind in global rankings.

The Earth Day 2022 must be seen as an opportunity to address the shortcomings that stop it from performing better on key parameters. This year's theme 'Invest in Our Planet' not only means aligning our individual actions to make the earth more sustainable, but also about analysing how well the governments at the centre and states have invested for ensuring effective enforcement of our environmental regulations.

(Policy Circle, April 22, 2022) <https://www.policycircle.org/environment/earth-day-2022-environment/>







## Food Processing Industries Ignore Consumer's Health Due to Fear of Economic Loss

Front of package labeling (FoPL) is one of the effective policy tools that can partially rebalance the unhealthy retail packaged food environment and aid consumers in making informed, healthier food choices. While several nations have implemented stronger regulations through the introduction of FoPL in food products and subsequently witnessed lower rates of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), no such restrictions exist in India. CUTS industry mapping study has revealed that food processing industries ignore consumers' health due to unwanted fear of economic loss.

(The Financial Express, February 25, 2022) <http://www.fnbnews.com/>

## Media Reports Questioned on India to Have Health Star Ratings

Consumer Organisations are questioning the media reports stating- India is soon to have Health Star Label on packaged foods as regulated by FSSAI. The major consumer organisations in the country are appalled by the recent news reports that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is introducing a star rating system for packaged foods in India. This is especially when the group of stakeholders identified and headed by the regulator itself in Front of Package Labelling are yet to come to any conclusion. The discussions are still ongoing with disagreements remaining to be addressed.

(The Hindu, Business Line, March 12, 2022) <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/>

## Ecolabelling, Public Procurement Support Key to Achieving SDG 12

By George Cheriyan and Simi TB

Ecolabelling and sustainability: The world took note of India's call to ditch consumerism and shift to a circular economy at the WEF Davos Agenda Summit. This was in line with the country's climate action initiatives, such as energy transition, green bonds, and sustainable urban planning, providing equitable economic growth and sustainable use of the planet's resources. Such initiatives by the government could accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP), especially when pressure is mounting on the country to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, mainly responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).

(Policy Circle, April 4, 2022) <https://snip.ly/5ozvur>

## India Generates 3.5 million Tonnes of Plastic Waste Annually (V-4)

India is generating 3.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said on Tuesday as he launched several green initiatives for plastic waste management. Speaking at the launch of the mascot 'Prakriti' to spread awareness among the masses about small changes that can be sustainably adopted in lifestyle for a better environment, Yadav urged everyone to join the efforts to beat plastic pollution and work towards a better future.

(Economic Times, April 05, 2022) <https://tinyurl.com/4mwhc5uf>



## World Consumer Rights Day, 2022

The United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP) were adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1985. The guidelines were revised in 1999 and again in 2015 to ensure that they are up-to-date and address the real challenges people worldwide face. The revised guidelines included a new section on sustainable consumption and e-commerce, financial services, other issues and implementation.

“Consumers from everywhere will benefit from digital financial services. Hence, digital financial services must be accessible, secure, confidential, and sustainable,” said Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS in his opening address.

CUTS International organised the Conference on World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) with the theme: ‘Fair Digital Finance’. Mehta suggested that WCRD should be one of the UN Days and the Department of Consumer Affairs should be strengthened at the National, State, and District levels.



Deepak Saxena, CUTS, highlighted that consumer organisations come together to raise awareness of an essential issue to consumers worldwide each year. He discussed six consumer rights that are part of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Munish P Kothari, former Regional Director of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), agreed that consumers should be aware of their rights. Kothari mentioned that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a critical role in raising consumer awareness.

Furthermore, Abhishek Kumar, Indicc Associate, spoke about Fair Digital Finance from a gender perspective, focusing on self-help groups. He stated that 60 percent of the population in India does not have access to the Internet, and there is a need for more capacity building.

Manoj Meena, Assistant Professor, University of Rajasthan, spoke about fraudsters targeting developing countries. People attempt to purchase low-cost products with doubtful security, and device manufacturers also play a crucial role in developing low-cost, secure chips.

Meena claims that a consumer rights chapter should be included in the college curriculum, and young people should be aware of their consumer rights.

Rakesh Krishna Sharma, RBI, Regional Office, Jaipur, spoke about activities that the RBI and several banks are involved in. He said India is the number one country globally regarding digital transactions. We must be aware of fraud and take steps to stop it.

Amol Kulkarni, Director, CUTS International, moderated the opening session and proposed a vote of thanks. The Conference was attended by more than 35 participants representing the RBI, industry, academics, and civil society organisations (CSOs).

Glimpses of  
some more  
ACTIVITIES





## Efficient Water Management is the Need of the Hour

“There is a need for a regulatory framework and reforms for efficient water management in India,” said Gopal Krishna Agrawal, Author of the Book “Water an element of life price sensitivity and consumption by the marginalised”. He spoke in the webinar organised by CUTS to observe World Water Day 2022. He opined that currently, there are several conflicts about water, which are very important for public debate.

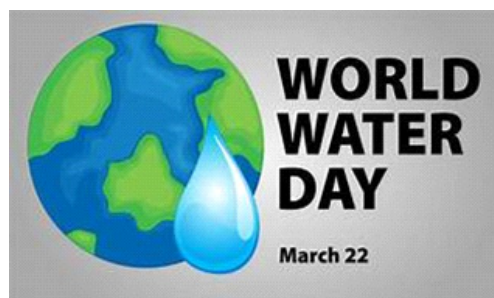
Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS, highlighted the relevance of the webinar topic and the gravity of the groundwater situation in our country.

Mathew Cherian, Chair, CARE India, spoke about how essential traditional knowledge is to recharge water. He stated that there is significant pressure on groundwater across the country, and reports are saying that states like Rajasthan would face a severe crunch in the coming years.

Shubha Ramachandran, Head, Water Team, Biome Environmental Trust, shared her experience from the perspective of an urban or urbanised context. She reminded us how people living in cities are unaware of where the water comes from and where the wastewater goes.

Joydeep Gupta, South Asia Director, The Third Pole, claimed that India is the largest user of groundwater in the world in irrigation, which is certainly not moving in a sustainable direction. During the discussions, the panelists also voiced the vital role of local governments in water management.

Mehta pointed out that CUTS has dealt with these issues for many years. He said a whole government approach is required as most issues cover various ministries other than just Water Resource Ministry. More than 50 participants attended the webinar.



## Combating Child Labour in Rajasthan

CUTS, in partnership with World Vision India (WVI) and Vagdhara, launched the project entitled ‘Strengthening Formal and Informal Systems and Structures as well as the Capacities of Vulnerable Children and Households to Reduce Child Labour in Banswara and Pratapgarh, Rajasthan’ at Pratapgarh on March 22, 2022.

The project’s objective is to reduce the incidences of harmful child labour by 50 percent by 2025 in Suhagpura block of Pratapgarh district and Ghatol block of Banswara district of Rajasthan. Sangeeta Beniwal, Chairperson of Rajasthan State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (RSCPCR), was the Chief Guest. She delivered the inaugural address and formally launched the project.



Prakash Chandra Sharma, District Collector, was the Guest of Honour. Charanjit Lal Meena, Additional Superintendent of Police, Pratapgarh, was a special guest. Around 70 participants attended, including Pradhans, Sarpanchs, other elected representatives, officials from various government departments and representatives from NGOs and CBOs of Pratapgarh district. George Cheriyan and Nimisha Sharma from Jaipur; Gauhar Mehmood from Chittorgarh; Kamlesh Kumar Jangid and Mohan Meghwal from Pratapgarh attended the event.



# Generating Demand for Effective Implementation of MVA Act 2019

Glimpses of  
some more  
ACTIVITIES



In partnership with Public Affairs Foundation, CUTS organised two road safety events in Karnataka in March 2022. The first one at Kalaburagi, Karnataka, on March 10, 2022, was attended by Satyapal Singh, where Yeshwanth V Gururkar, District Collector, was the chief guest and NV Prasad, Regional Commissioner, Kalaburagi and C Mallikarjuna, Joint Commissioner, Transport, were special guests. Officials such as medical, transport and law students etc., attended the meeting.

Madhu Sudan Sharma participated in the second one in Belagavi, Karnataka, organised on March 25, 2022. Divisional Commissioner, Police Commissioner of Belagavi, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Traffic, Regional Transport Offices (RTOs), District Transport Officers (DTOs), Transport Inspectors, District Trauma Care in charge of Belagavi district hospital, officials from the Public Works Department (PWD), Karnataka Roadways, practicing lawyers on Motor Vehicles Act, 2019 and related issues and around 40 other officials and representatives participated in the consultation.

Similarly, the 'District Level Consultation was organised at Chittorgarh, Rajasthan on April 25, 2022. Shri C P Joshi, Honorable MP, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan was the chief guest and Rajeev Joshi, Additional SP; Jagdish Prasad, RTO and Manish, DTO were the other guests who attended the consultation. More than 85 participants participated in the consultation, consisting of various social groups, civil society organisations, and government officials. The print media well covered the consultation.

In the series, one more state-level at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, was organised by CED in partnership with CUTS on April 26, 2022. Antony Raju, Hon'ble Minister for Transport, Government of Kerala, was the chief guest in the inaugural session. Anup Kuruville John, IPS, IG of Police (Social Policing & Traffic) was the special guest's chief. More than 80 participants participated in the meeting, and various government department officials, such as medical, transport and police etc., attended the meeting.





## CUTS Demanded Effective Implementation of Ecomark Scheme in India

CUTS observed Earth Day 2022 at the Mother Earth sculpture site at Jaipur on April 22, 2022 to demand an effective Ecomark in India. Ecomarks are important for promoting sustainable consumption and production policy that aims to reduce the negative impact of consumption and production on the environment, health, climate, and natural resources.

Eco mark scheme was launched in 1991 by the Ministry of Environment & Forest, Government of India, to quickly identify environmentally friendly products. The label is awarded to consumer goods which meet the specified environmental criteria and the quality requirements of Indian standards. Ecomark is identified by the symbol of Matka (earthen pot).

The scheme has not been able to take off as expected for several reasons, including the absence of support through government procurement. The government and concerned agencies need to implement the scheme effectively and create awareness to increase consumer demands. Neither producers nor consumers are aware of its existence or willing to go for this label.

For sustainable consumption to happen, the government need to ensure that the market provides consumers with sustainable choices that are reliable and trustworthy. Today, the market shelves are overtaken by-products that position themselves as 'sustainable', 'environment friendly', 'eco-friendly', 'Recyclable' etc. In actuality, they don't, and they are merely taking advantage of the changing consumer behaviour to push their sales. A reliable ecolabel is a must for consumers to ensure that the products



## A Plan of Action to Support Strong FoPL in India

### *GHAI Partners Meet*

George Cheriyan, Simi TB and Satyapal Singh participated in the Global Health Advocacy of India (GHAI) partners meeting on Front-of-package labeling in New Delhi on February 24-25, 2022. During the meeting, Cheriyan made a brief presentation on 'Industry Mapping Report' on February 24, 2022.



He was also part of the panel discussion about the strategies to counter industry opposition, which Vandana Shah facilitated.

Simi TB made a presentation on 'SWOT analysis on advocacy for strong FoPL' on February 25, 2022. More than 20 participants from various organisations participated in the meeting and developed a plan of action to support the strong FoPL in India.





- Pratibha Jain attended a webinar on 'India's target of eradicating tuberculosis by 2025 by Testing and Treating the Missing Millions with Tuberculosis' on January 11, 2022.
- Simi TB attended a UN System Response to Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution webinar organised in partnership with the United Nations Environment Management Group (UN-EMG) and GRID-Arendal on January 13, 2022.
- Amar Deep Singh, Amit Babu and Simi TB attended an online stakeholder consultation workshop organised by UN Environment Programme (UNEP) & World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) on January 25, 2022.
- Amit Babu attended the Consumers International call on World Consumer Rights Day 2022 on January 26, 2022, about CI's Digital Finance Summit 2022.
- Amit Babu attended the Hallmarking of Gold Jewellery webinar organised by the Bureau of Indian Standards in New Delhi on January 28, 2022.
- George Cheriyan and Nimisha Sharma, along with Sasmita Lalit Jena, Associate Director, West Zone, World Vision India had, met Sangeeta Beniwal, Chairperson, Rajasthan State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (RSCPCR), on February 11, 2022
- Satyapal Singh and Amit Babu attended World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) organised by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) on February 16-18, 2022, under the umbrella theme: 'Towards a Resilient Planet: Ensuring a Sustainable and Equitable Future. Attended a session titled "*Plastics and Circular Economy: Making EPR workable*".
- George Cheriyan met with Rehana Rayaz Chisti, newly appointed Chairperson of Rajasthan State Women's Commission, on February 22, 2022.
- Cheriyan and Satyapal visited the Department of Consumer Affairs and met Rohit Singh, Secretary of Consumer Affairs, in New Delhi on February 25, 2022, wherein Cheriyan briefly discussed key consumer issues.
- Simi, Amit and Pratibha attended 'Warning Labels or Health Star Rating (HSR) on Unhealthy Food Products: What Should India Choose?' organised by the Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) on March 09, 2022. Cheriyan was one of the panellists
- Cheriyan attended a National Level Colloquium on State Action Plans on Anti Microbial Resistance (AMR) in India 2022, organised by WHO (India), ReAct (Asia Pacific) and World Animal Protection (India), in Delhi on March 14, 2022. He was one of the panellists in a 'Behavioural Change and Local Action Plans on AMR' session.
- Simi virtually attended the Economist Impact 7th Annual Sustainability Week hosted by Economist Impact, London, from March 21-24, 2022.
- Madhu Sudan Sharma participated in the webinar organised by Accountability Initiative on 'Making Governance in India Simpler to Understand' on March 15, 2022.
- Pratibha attended a public dialogue on 'Our Role in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse and Trafficking' organised by Kailash Satyarthi Children Foundation (KSCF) and Bhaichara Foundation on March 31, 2022.
- Madhu Sudan participated in a Webex meeting organised by MoRTH on April 22, 2022. The World Bank jointly consulted the key road safety stakeholders from the select states of the World Bank under the State Support Programme for strengthening road safety.
- George, Deepak, Madhu Sudan, Amar, Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Rajdeep Pareek, Nimisha, Amit & PratibhaA attended CCC Convention on 'Consumer Empowerment' on April 30, 2022, organised at Jaipur. Pratap Singh Khachariawas, State Minister of Consumer Affairs, was the chief guest. Other dignitaries in the inaugural session were Justice G K Vyas, Chairman, Rajasthan Human Rights Commission; Justice B L Sharma, President, Rajasthan State Consumer Redressal Commission and Mrs Kanika Kalia, State Head of BIS, Jaipur. In the technical sessions, the first one on Standards was presented by Kanika Kalia and chaired by Anil Johri, Patron, CCC. In the next session, Cyber Crime expert lawyer Nishit Dixit made a presentation and Cheriyan e spoke on the topic as a panellist.



### Upcoming Events/Project Activities

- CUTS-SSNC-ProScope Activities, 2022 as per the Work Plan
- CUTS-GRSP-ROSA Activities (Extended Phase III)
- CUTS-GHAI-Consumer-Friendly FoPL in India
- CUTS-World Vision-Combating Child Labour in Rajasthan Activities

### CART at Social Network

- CART is managing four FB pages, one each for MyCity, Insight into the Indian States (I3S), ProOb & CoPSA (Community of Practice on Social Accountability), GSK and three dedicated web portals for (ProOb), COPSA and I3S.
- CART has a Twitter account with link: <https://twitter.com/CUTSCART> and Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cutsintcart>
- Besides, CART is also responsible for moderating two google groups:

#### CUTSConsumersUp:

Consumer Empowerment in India to take consumer protection issues forward.

#### CUTSGovForum:

Discuss news and views on Governance issues and challenges in India.

#### CUTSRoadSafety:

Discuss and disseminate relevant issues on road safety.



#### CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CART)

D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302 016, India, Ph: 91.141.5133259, 2282821, Fx: 91.141.4015395

Email: [cart@cuts.org](mailto:cart@cuts.org), Web: [www.cuts-international.org/cart](http://www.cuts-international.org/cart)

Also at Delhi, Calcutta and Chittorgarh (India); Lusaka (Zambia); Nairobi (Kenya); Accra (Ghana); Hanoi (Vietnam); Geneva (Switzerland) and Washington DC (USA).