

National Conference on Consumer Rights

on 18th March, 2015

at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi

A National Conference on Consumer Rights was held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on 18th March, 2015. The theme of the Conference was Consumers' Rights to Healthy Food.

Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, Hon'ble Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, addressed the conference and emphasized the importance of making the life of Indian consumers easier. He informed that the Government would listen and respond to what consumers have to say and initiate a wide range of specific actions to improve the effectiveness of creating awareness, protecting rights and addressing grievances of consumers. He noted that the conference provided a platform to draw up an action plan to take specific measures towards establishing consumer rights to healthy food and consumer grievance redress mechanisms.

The conference witnessed participation from Honorable Mr. Justice D.K. Jain, President, NCDRC, Secretary Department of Consumer Affairs, Secretaries of various Central Ministries, DG, BIS, CCPC Members, Senior Officers, Members of Press and representatives of various Voluntary Consumer Organisations (VCOs). Two technical sessions viz. (i) Consumer Rights to Healthy

Food and (ii) Grievance Redress Mechanisms in Consumer Courts were organized during the conference and the recommendations / outcomes of these sessions are being followed up by the Department.

The conference noted that:

- (1) The Department is amending important Acts administered by it, thereby bringing in provisions in tune with the changing scenario in economy, trade, business and consumer expectations.
- (2) In order to ensure that the Indian consumer receives quality product, Government is trying to bring out amendments to BIS Act 1986 to ensure all products whether manufactured domestically or imported conform to laid down Indian standards wherever made mandatory through BIS.
- (3) The Department has proposed several strategic steps like, supplementing the existing redress system with an active Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanism, building a strong consumer information and advisory system by integrating Consumer Helplines and Consumer Care Centers, setting up a National Consumer Protection Authority to deal with unfair trade practices and using Information Technology tools for better delivery of services.
- (4) The Department has initiated a dialogue on consumer advocacy with six important ministries – Agriculture, Food, Education, Health, Financial Services, Transport and Urban Development that have a consumer interface and has set up an inter-ministerial committee to oversee and promote the consumer interests.

Government to launch Joint Campaign on Consumer Awareness through these departments.

(5) Six Grahak Suvidha Kendras are being set up across the country which would help consumers, especially, the rural consumers, to get all kind of information and personalized assistance to resolve their problems. GSKs would be run by Voluntary Consumer Organizations who are already doing the work in the field will be centrally located to provide consumers easy access.

(6) A dedicated portal has been launched to serve as a Central Registry for complaints by consumers against deceptive trade practices or misleading advertisements.

(7) The Hon'ble Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution released "Consumer Hand Book" which would help in creating awareness among consumers and also guide them in lodging their grievances and getting remedial actions.

(8) A book on Consumer Law by Smt. Rajalakshmi Rao was released by the Hon'ble Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

(9) An e-book on the Bureau of Indian Standards was released by the hon'ble Minister.