

New Consumer Protection Bill likely to be introduced in the present session of parliament

Shri Ram Vilas Paswan inaugurates National Consumer Day 2017 celebrations

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Sri Ram Vilas Paswan, Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said that the new Consumer Protection Bill has been approved by the cabinet and is likely to be introduced in the present session of parliament. Shri Paswan said that the enactment of BIS act 2016 and Consumer Protection Bill are historical events in the history of consumer movements. It was stated by Shri Ram Vilas Paswan in his presidential address on the occasion of National Consumer Day 2017 with the theme "Emerging Digital Markets: Issues & Challenges for Consumer Protection" organized by Department of Consumer Affairs at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi today. The Union Minister further stated that exiting Consumer Protection Act enacted in 1986 is 31 years old. Meanwhile, the whole scenario the market has changed. No one imagined that smart phones will become a complete world in itself and the future of the digital world in the next 25 years is also not predictable.

Shri Ram Vilas Paswan mentioned that Government has embarked on modernizing the legislation on consumer protection to keep pace with the changes in markets to ensure fair, equitable and consistent outcomes for consumers; and to enable swift executive intervention in the nature of the class action to prevent consumer detriment. He commented that this is the age of technology, and educating the consumer and redressing his grievances in the digital world is important.

The Union Minister stated that digital literacy and financial literacy should go hand in hand so that in a cashless economy envisioned by the government, consumers are skilled enough to use digital payments system and confidently use various financial products.

Shri C.R Chaudhary, the Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said that Trade and Business now have become global. This necessitates the systematic development of consumer policies, in our country with comprehensive legislation and effective enforcement, just redress mechanisms and targeted programmes. We are here not only to protect consumers but also to empower them. There is need to educate consumers to be vigilant while making purchases in the digital market or making digital payments. The next step is to provide an adequate mechanism for grievance redressal. Further, alternate dispute redressal through National Consumer Helpline and mediation are being encouraged.

Justice D K Jain, President, NCDRC in his address mentioned that during this year there has been 139% increase in the cases filed before NCDRC which indicates an increase in the level of awareness among consumers and increasing popularity of consumers fora. The Consumer Fora are able to give relief not only in the purchases made in the offline world but also cases wherein the consumers have been cheated in Cyber Space. The New Act will further strengthen the mechanism and the consumers will be better protected in the online environment.

Shri Avinash K.Srivastava, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs said that the Department has been keeping abreast of the latest challenges to consumer protection and has been devising various strategies to protect consumers from exploitation. Three important steps have taken by Department of Consumer Affairs to protect consumers in the online world: the amendments to the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 have been made making it mandatory that goods displayed by the seller on e-commerce platform shall contain declarations required under the Rules. Main e-commerce companies have been brought to convergence platform. Standing Committee on the new Consumer Protection Bill has recommended formulating rules on e-commerce.

The event saw the launch of on Crowd sourcing of Price data, Zonal helplines and Cooperation with Meity for digital payment grievances as new initiatives of the Department on consumer grievance redressal. On the occasion, three publications on digital market and other consumer issues were also released.

