

Department of Consumers Affairs Celebrates World Consumer Rights Day 2017

E-commerce companies increasingly coming under National Consumer Helpline convergence programme: Shri Ram Vilas Paswan

Packaged commodities rules being amended for e-commerce companies to display mandatory declarations on their sites: Shri Paswan

Department of Consumers Affairs launch various new initiatives for consumer grievance redressal and consumer education

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Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, the Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has said that the Government is already on the right track in facilitating the consumers to harness the full benefits of digitization and putting in place sufficient safeguards against risks associated with the online world. Sh. Paswan said that this is the age of technology, and educating the consumer and redressing his grievances in the digital world is a challenge. E-commerce companies are increasingly coming under our national consumer helpline convergence programme where consumer grievances entered online, are being addressed expeditiously.

Sh. Ram Vilas Paswan stated it in his presidential address on the occasion of the World Consumer Rights Day 2017. The Department of Consumer Affairs, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution, celebrated the World Consumer Rights Day 2017 with the theme "Consumer Rights in digital age" in New Delhi, today. The Programme was presided over by Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, the Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, the Union Minister Law & Justice, Electronics & IT and was the Chief Guest of the event.

Shri Paswan mentioned that packaged commodities rules are being amended to mandate that e-commerce companies should display the mandatory declarations on their sites if they are offering packaged commodities for sale on online platforms; Shri Paswan suggested that both ministries, the consumer affairs and the Information technology, have to work in tandem to create digital awareness programmes and urged the NASSCOM to encourage companies to adhere to a code of ethics where they do not hide in fine print the consumer's agreement to share his private data and make him sign inadvertently. Shri Paswan emphasized that openness of the Internet, the lack of identification and the low level of users' understanding of security; particularly among the first time users is a major area that requires focused efforts.

Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, the Union Minister of Law and Justice, Electronics and Information Technology in his speech laid stress on focusing on a digitally empowered society instead of digitally enabled society. Shri Prasad said that the focus of the government is digital governance, and service delivery systems using social media for good governance. He said that all information supporting public cause should be in public domain.

The National Building Code was launched on the occasion. The code marks culmination of efforts of more than 100 experts who worked for more than two years. The code contains provisions on use of new/innovative materials and technologies and on prefabricated construction techniques that can give fillip to speedier construction to meet the objectives of Housing for All by 2022. It also contains administrative aspects prescribing norms for time bound building approval based on integrated approval process from all concerned agencies through single window clearance approach and adopting online process, thereby promoting Ease of Doing Business.

New initiatives of the Department on consumer grievance redressal and consumer education, leveraging new age technologies were launched which included a hindi portal and web chat for grievance redressal, mobile App for CONFONET (consumer for a network, a project that connects all Fora in the country and monitor the cases online) to enable track cases online, and model approval for legal metrology , and initiatives of Voluntary Consumer Organizations (VCOs) which included the survey report on consumer safety, QR code App for detecting fake /spurious products, and awards to five states Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana for their consumer friendly practices.

Shri C.R Chaudhary, the Minister of Food & Public Distribution for Consumer Affairs said that recent promotion of less cash economy by the Government has opened new opportunities to millions of Indians to cross

the digital divide and avail the vast potential offered by the digital economic grid. Hon'ble Prime Minister's move to incentivize digital payments will offer a strong support to our ongoing efforts in helping the country leapfrog the cash generation to digital payment solutions. Shri Chaudhary advised that a comprehensive approach is needed to address all the key elements of the financial systems in the digital world, including the data security, privacy, safety and grievance Redressal.

Shri Hem Pande, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs mentioned about efforts being made in the regulatory framework to enhance consumer protection in e-commerce sector which is expanding rapidly. The Government is coming up with a new Consumer Protection Bill which is in advanced stage of consideration and relevant Rules and Regulations will be notified after its enactment that will adequately address the issues of jurisdiction, scope of liability, executive action against unfair trade practices as well as alternate dispute resolution.

Smt Rekha Gupta, Member NCDRC mentioned that world consumer day is an opportunity to promote basic consumer rights. Smt Gupta mentioned that the theme selected for the day is a relevant as the Hon'ble Prime Minister has launched the digital India initiative in July, 2015 with the vision of providing digital connectivity, services, e-governance and digitizing health and education areas. Security breaches, privacy data protection have become important areas that need attention to provide better consumer protection. She mentioned about many complaints received in consumer fora on e-commerce and on digital financial products like cloning of ATM cards, electronics transfer of funds and unauthorized withdrawal of money. She hoped that with the new provisions in the proposed CP Act amendment bill, many of the unfair trade practices and unfair terms and conditions of contract and digital fraud could be effectively tackled.

Shri R. Chandershekar, President, NASSCOM in his theme address briefed about the impact of digital technology on everything that is around us, consumer behavior and lifestyle etc. He mentioned about new digital technology that is riding on the internet and the importance of benefits and perquisites that accrue to the consumers, if this are being used positively for consumer information and education. He mentioned in this connection about user reviews of products in social media as best consumer protection channels.. He mentioned that the important thing is to convert the digital technology to the benefit of consumers information and education as an aware consumer is best protected. He suggested that we should look into the best international practices on how security breaches in the digital area were tackled and minimized rather than going for a trail and error method. He said that just as a consumer is able to buy products online sitting at home, he should be able to file complaints and get redress in same manner.

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