

Government of India
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Department of Consumer Affairs

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2131
TO BE ANSWERED ON 12.03.2025

ENHANCING CONSUMER GRIEVANCES REDRESSAL MECHANISMS

2131. SHRI GURJEET SINGH AUJLA:

Will the Minister of **CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has conducted any assessment of consumer rights violations, unfair trade practices or price exploitation in border region in view of consumer related challenges faced by people of Amritsar and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the measures taken by the Government to ensure strict enforcement of quality standards in light of rampant adulteration of essential food items, especially in dairy, grains and packaged goods;
- (c) the details of the specific actions taken by the Government to curb the inflow of illegal or substandard products into the market and protect consumers from fraudulent goods;
- (d) whether the Government has any plans to enhance consumer grievance redressal mechanisms in border districts including setting up special consumer courts or fast-track complaint resolution centres; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI B.L.VERMA)

(a) to (e) : Department of Consumer Affairs is continuously working for consumer protection and empowerment of consumers by enactment of progressive legislations. With a view to modernize the framework governing the consumer protection in the new era of globalization, technologies, ecommerce markets etc. Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was repealed and Consumer Protection Act, 2019 was enacted.

Salient features of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 are establishment of a Central Consumer Protection Authority(CCPA); simplification of the adjudication process in the Consumer Commissions; online filing of a complaint by a consumer in the Consumer Commission having jurisdiction over the complainant's place of residence/work or where the cause of action arises, or the place of business or residence of the opposite parties; deemed admissibility of complaints if admissibility is not decided within 21 days of filing; provision of product liability; penal provisions for manufacture/sale of adulterated products/spurious goods; provision for making rules for prevention of unfair trade practice in e-commerce and direct selling etc.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 provides for a three tier quasi-judicial machinery at District, State and Central levels commonly known as "Consumer Commissions" for protection of the rights of consumers and to provide simple and speedy redressal of consumer disputes including those related with unfair trade practices. The Consumer Commissions are empowered to give relief of a specific nature and award compensation to consumers, wherever appropriate. At present, there is one State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission at the state level and twenty three District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions at the district level in the State of Punjab.

As per Section 38 (7) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, every complaint shall be disposed of as expeditiously as possible and endeavour shall be made to decide the complaint within a period of three months from the date of receipt of notice by opposite party where the complaint does not require analysis or testing of commodities and within five months if it requires analysis or testing of commodities.

To serve the interest of speedy justice to the end consumers, Consumer Protection Act states that no adjournment shall ordinarily be granted by the consumer commissions unless sufficient cause is shown and the reasons for grant of adjournment have been recorded in writing by the Commission.

Section 90 and 91 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 provide for punishment for manufacturing for sale or for storing or selling or for distributing or importing any product containing an adulterant or spurious goods, which includes imprisonment or fine depending on the extent of injury to the consumer.

Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), an executive agency, came into existence on 24.07.2020. It is designed to intervene, to prevent consumer detriment arising from unfair trade practices and to initiate class action(s), including the enforcement of recalls, refunds and return of products. Its core mandate is to prevent and regulate false or misleading advertisements which are prejudicial to the public interest.

The National Consumer Helpline (NCH) administered by the Department of Consumer Affairs has emerged as a single point of access to consumers across the country for their grievance redressal at a pre-litigation stage. Consumers can register their grievances from all over the country in 17 languages through a toll-free number 1915. These grievances can be registered on Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism (INGRAM), an omni-channel IT enabled central portal, through various channels- WhatsApp (8800001915), SMS (8800001915), email (nch-ca@gov.in), the NCH app, the web portal (consumerhelpline.gov.in), and the Umang app as per their convenience. 1049 companies, who have voluntarily partnered with NCH, as part of the 'Convergence' programme directly respond to these grievances according to their redressal process, and revert by providing a feedback to the complainant on the portal. Complaints against those companies, who have not partnered with National Consumer Helpline, are forwarded to the company for redressal.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), through State/UTs and its Regional Offices, conducts regular surveillance, monitoring, inspection and random sampling of various food products to check compliance with the quality and safety parameters and other requirements as laid down under Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006, and regulations made thereunder. In cases where food samples are found to be non-conforming, penal action is taken against the defaulting Food Business Operators as per the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, Rules and Regulations.

Further, for regular inspection and monitoring the quality of food, FSSAI has also provided financial and technical support to the States/UTs for strengthening the food testing ecosystem which includes procurement of High End and Basic Equipment, setting up of Microbiology laboratory and managing contingencies, Mobile Food Testing Laboratories, Manpower, National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accreditation etc.

FSSAI has sanctioned a total grant of Rs. 23.56 Crores from 2016-2024 to the state of Punjab for strengthening the food testing ecosystem. FSSAI has also sanctioned 23 Mobile Food Testing Laboratories for the State of Punjab. These Mobile labs are equipped with basic infrastructure for quick qualitative testing for detection of adulteration in various food commodities. Mobile labs are also used as a platform for conducting training and awareness programmes across the State. Mobile food labs, deployed in the state of Punjab conducted a total of 20276 surveillance tests, 1030 public awareness programs, and 156 training sessions for various stakeholders.
