

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3170
ANSWERED ON:16.03.2010
CONSUMER MOVEMENT
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Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of funds disbursed for consumer movement in the country during each of last three years and the current year, State-wise;
- (b) whether the consumer movement has not been effective in rural and remote areas;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor alongwith the corrective measures including amendment of the Consumer Act taken/ proposed to be taken in this regard;
- (d) the number of posts lying vacant in consumer courts alongwith the steps taken to fill the same. State-wise; and
- (e) the number of consumer cases pending in various States and the steps taken for their speedy disposal?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K. V. THOMAS)

(a): The year-wise details of funds released for the `Computerization & Computer Networking of Consumer Fora in the Country1 (CONFONET) scheme, to the National Informatics Centre (NIC), which is the implementing agency, during the last three years and current year is given as under:

Year Funds released to NIC

2006-07	Rs.1732.00 Lakh
2007-08	Rs.719.00 Lakh
2008-09	Nil
2009-10	Rs.709.99 Lakh

The State-wise details of assistance released to States during the last three years and current year for strengthening the infrastructure of Consumer Fora under Integrated Project on Consumer Protection (IPCP) and Strengthening Consumer Fora (SCF) schemes are at Annexure-I.

As regards Statewise details of funds disbursed during last 3 years to Organisations for the Consumer Movement, from the Consumer Welfare Fund as well as grants-in-aid released to States for Consumer Awareness Programme, these are at Annexure II and III respectively.

(b): No, Madam. Under the Consumer Protection Act, three-tier system of Consumer Fora consisting of the National Commission as the apex body, State Commissions in each State and District Fora in each district throughout the country has been set-up. This covers the rural and remote areas also. Under the aegis of Consumer Awareness Campaign popularly known as ``Jago Grahak Jago` special efforts have been made to reach the consumers in the rural and remote areas and make them aware of their rights and the redressal mechanisms available. Doordarshan and All India Radio have been used in a major way with the extensive use of Regional Kendras of Doordarshan, Krishi Darshan Kendras and Regional Channels of AIR. The huge network of 1.55 lakhs rural post offices is also being used for dissemination of consumer awareness through display of posters.

An impact assessment study of `Jago Grahak Jago` carried out in 58 districts and 290 villages comprising of all parts of the country was carried out. Out of almost of 12,000 respondents selected, 53% were rural. Almost 60% of the respondents have confirmed that they have come across `Jago Grahak Jago` advertisement. Almost 54% respondents confirmed that it has had a positive impact; for example, almost 50% respondents have started checking MRP; 39% have started asking bills/receipts, 66% have started checking weights/measures, 44% have started checking expiry date, 45% have started checking ISI/Hallmark. More than 73% respondents felt the necessity for the campaign and almost 50% displayed satisfaction with the campaigns.

(c): Does not arise, in view (b) above.

(d): As per information furnished by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), the State-wise details of posts lying vacant in various Consumer Fora of the country is at Annexure-IV. Although it is the responsibility of the respective State Governments to fill up the vacant posts of Presidents & Members in the State Commission & District Fora, the Central Government has also been requesting State Governments to take advance action for filling up expected vacancies of President and Members in the State Commission & District Fora. They are also being advised to maintain a panel of names, which can be used for filling up vacant posts. Moreover the President of the National Commission also writes letters to the Chief Ministers of the States from time to time for issuing instructions for filling up the vacancies, so that State Commission/District Forums may not remain non-functional due to vacancies of President/Member. As regards filling up of vacancies of President and Members in the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), there are presently three (3) posts vacant for which the process of filling up of the vacancies of Members in NCDRC has been initiated and is under way.

(e): As per information made available by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), the State-wise details of consumer complaints pending in various Consumer Fora of the country are at Annexures V (A) & (B). The major steps taken by the Central Government for improving the functioning of the Consumer Fora and enable speedy disposal of consumer complaints, in this regard are as under:

(i) Financial assistance is being extended to the States/UTs for strengthening the infrastructure of Consumer Fora so that minimum level of facilities are made available at each forum required for their effective functioning. Through the 'CONFONET' scheme, Consumer Fora are being computerized, which is expected to expedite disposal of consumer complaints.

(ii) With an objective to facilitate the Fora in quicker disposal of cases, several provisions were made through Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act, 2002 which included enabling the Senior Most Member to preside over the Consumer Fora if the President is absent for any reasons, establishment of Circuit Benches of National Commission/State Commissions and providing for reappointment of President/Members of Consumer Fora.

(iii) The Consumer Fora are being advised to adopt the Lok Adalat method for disposing off some of the complaints especially the long pending complaints.

(iv) To avoid non-functionality of Consumer Fora due to vacancy of President/Members, the States/UTs have been advised that wherever required, neighbouring Consumer Fora can be clubbed with the non-functional Consumer Forum so its complaints can be heard by the President/Members of the neighbouring Consumer Forum.

(v) The National Commission also holds Circuit Bench sittings as per the provisions of Section 22 C of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, for rendering speedy justice at the doorsteps of the consumers of that particular State. So far, the National Commission has held Circuit Bench sitting at Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Pune, Cochin and Kolkata.

(vi) Four Additional Benches have been established in the National Commission.

(vii) Additional Benches of the State Commissions are also functioning in the States of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh & Punjab while 2 Circuit Benches are functioning in Maharashtra.