

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:266
ANSWERED ON:24.04.2012
NATIONWIDE CONSUMER NETWORK
Adsul Shri Anandrao Vithoba;Tharoor Shri Shashi

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of the delays in the disposal of cases in the consumer courts/fora;
- (b) if so, the details of the new steps/initiatives taken for speedy disposal of the cases;
- (c) whether the Government is considering to set up a mediation and advisory network on a national scale to ensure speedy solution of disputes and reduce the burden of cases on consumer courts;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the time by which a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

Answer

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

(a) to (e): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.266 FOR 24.04.2012 REGARDING NATIONWIDE CONSUMER NETWORK.

(a) & (b): Yes, Madam. The following steps, inter-alia have been taken to improve the performance/working of Consumer Fora in the country:

(1) The State Governments have been requested from time to time to take action well in advance for filling up of vacancies of President and Members and to maintain a panel of candidates for filling up of future vacancies also to avoid delays in appointments. The Central Government has also requested State Governments that wherever required, adjacent Fora may be clubbed together so that functioning of Consumer Fora is not affected due to any temporary absence or vacancy.

(2) In order to dispose of the pending cases, Circuit Benches from National Commission have been visiting States. So far, the National Commission has held Circuit Bench sittings at Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Pune, Kolkata, Ernakulam, Ahmedabad and Bhopal. Some State Commissions have constituted Additional Benches mainly to dispose off backlog of pending cases.

(3) Financial assistance is provided by the Central Government to the States/UTs for strengthening of infrastructure of Consumer Fora (Building as well as Non-Building Assets). The Computerization and Computer Networking of all the Consumer Fora across the country is also being implemented through NIC, under the "CONFONET" Scheme.

(4) Some of the State Commissions and District Fora are adopting the process of holding Lok Adalats for speedy disposal of the cases. The National Commission has also held Lok Adalats aiming to reduce the pendency of cases and also faster disposal of cases.

(5) Apart from the above, the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2011 has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 16.12.2011, with provisions made for empowering the Consumer Fora for faster decision on Disposal of cases, simplifying selection procedure to avoid delay in selection of Members / President, Online Filing of applications and Strengthening of Penalty Provisions etc.

(c) to (e): Yes, Madam. A proposal for implementation of a new scheme on Consumer Counselling and Mediation in the 12th Plan period has been recommended by the Working Group. Under this new scheme, State Consumer Helpline (SCH), Consumer Advisory Centres (CAC) and Mediation Advisory Centres (MAC) will function as one coordinated system.