

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:20  
ANSWERED ON:13.03.2012  
CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL AGENCIES  
Kanubhai Patel Jayshreeben;Majhi Shri Pradeep Kumar

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

- (a) whether Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies including District Fora have been set up in various parts of the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has taken note of a large number of posts lying vacant in the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission/ Forum and taken appropriate follow-up action;
- (d) if so, the details alongwith the present status thereof;
- (e) the details of circuit benches functioning in the country alongwith their functions; and
- (f) the steps taken by the Government for strengthening of Consumer Fora in the country?

**Answer**

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

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

STATEMENT REFERRED IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (f) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.20 FOR 13.03.2012 REGARDING CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL AGENCIES.

(a) & (b): Yes, Madam. As per the information received from National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), the State-wise details of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies including District Fora as on 29.02.2012 are at Annexure – I.

(c) & (d): Yes, Madam. While the State Governments are responsible for filling up of vacant posts in the State Commission and District Fora, the Central Government have been taking the following steps in this regard:

(i) The Central Government has been requesting State Governments to take advance action for filling up expected vacancies of president and Members and maintain a panel of candidates for filling up of vacant posts to avoid delays in appointments. The Central Government has been requesting State Governments that wherever required, adjacent Fora may be clubbed together so that functioning of consumer Fora is not affected due to any vacancies.

(ii) In the consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill 2011 which has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 16.12.2011, provision is being made to reduce delays in the appointment of President/Members in the District forum and Members in the State/National commission, wherein the State or Central Government, as the case may be, if it is not in agreement with the recommendations of the Selection committee, shall convey their decision within two months of receipt of the panel so that the Selection committee can reconsider their recommendations.

As per the information received from National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), the present State-wise status of vacancies of President and Members in the State Commission and District Fora as on 29.02.2012 is given at Annexure – II.

(e): As regards the National Commission, the Commission has identified 13 places for holding Circuit Benches. It held its first Circuit bench sitting at Hyderabad in the month of January 2005. The second one at Bangalore in the month of January 2006, at Chennai in January 2007, at Pune in January-February 2008, at Cochin in March-April, 2009, at Kolkata in January-February, 2010, at Ahmedabad in February-March, 2011 and lastly at Bhopal in January-February, 2012.

As regards State Commission, Circuit Benches/Additional Benches are functioning in the following States:-

- (i) Gujarat 03 Additional Benches
- (ii) Haryana 01 Additional Bench
- (iii) Maharashtra Circuit bench at Nagpur & Aurangabad
- (iv) Uttar Pradesh 01 Additional Bench
- (v) West Bengal 01 Additional Bench

(vi) Madhya Pradesh 01 Additional Bench  
(vii) Punjab 01 Additional Bench

(f): Although it is the responsibility of the concerned State Government to set up the State Commission and District Fora and provide it with adequate infrastructure manpower and funds, the Central Government has been supplementing there efforts with the following schemes for Strengthening Consumer Fora in the country:

l) For strengthening infrastructure of Consumer Fora the following schemes have been implemented over the years:

(i) One Time Grant (OTG)

(a) One Time Grant of 1995: The establishment of State Commissions and the District Fora and providing infrastructural facilities, manpower, etc. for their effective functioning is the responsibility of the State Governments/ UTs. However, in order to supplement the efforts of the State Governments, the Central Government had extended a one time financial assistance for strengthening the infrastructure facility of the Consumer Fora to the extent of Rs. 61.80 crore to the States/UTs at the rate of Rs. 50.00 lakhs each for 32 State Commissions and Rs. 10.00 lakhs each for 458 District Fora that had been established by 1995.

(b) One Time Grant of 2004-05: The Central Government further extended a one time financial assistance for strengthening the infrastructure of the Consumer Fora to the extent of Rs. 10.20 crore to 3 newly created State Commissions and 53 District Fora, which had been established after 1995, @ Rs. 75 lakhs and Rs. 15 lakhs respectively to 13 States during the financial year 2004-05.

(ii) Scheme of 'Integrated Project on Consumer Protection (IPCP)'

To supplement the efforts of the State Governments/UT Administrations for strengthening the infrastructure of the Consumer Fora, the scheme of "Integrated Project on consumer Protection (IPCP)" was implemented during the years 2006-07 and 2007-08 wherein financial assistance was extended to States so that minimum level of facilities (infrastructure) were provided to each Consumer Forum in the country required for their effective functioning. An amount of Rs. 73.82 crore was released to 21 States upto 31.03.2008 viz. at the time of closure of the scheme, to strengthen the infrastructure of 506 Consumer Fora. At the closure, the second instalment remained due in respect of 181 Consumer Fora buildings in 12 States as the 12 States could not complete utilization of the first instalment in time to seek the second instalment from the Central Government. An amount of Rs. 13.20 crore was released during 2008-09 to 6 of these States as second instalment for 131 Consumer Fora buildings, after they furnished utilization reports.

(iii) Scheme of 'Strengthening Consumer Fora (SCF):

The Central Government has been extending financial assistance to States/UTs for strengthening the infrastructure of Consumer Fora so that minimum level of facilities are made available at each Consumer Forum, which are required for their effective functioning. The scheme 'Strengthening Consumer Fora (SCF)' has been formulated for implementation with an overall outlay of Rs. 54.50 crore during the last 4 years of the XIth Plan viz. 2008-09 to 2011-12. Infrastructural Facilities being provided under the scheme include construction of new building of the Consumer Fora, carrying out addition/alteration/renovation of existing buildings and grant for acquiring non-building assets such as furniture, office equipment etc. Under the scheme of 'Strengthening Consumer Fora', an amount of Rs. 6.52 crore has been released to 6 eligible States upto 29.02.2012 during 2011-12. The State-wise details of assistance released during the last 4 years under the scheme of Strengthening of Consumer Fora (SCF) as on 29.02.2012 is given at Annexure – III.

II) CONFONET

The scheme of 'Computerization and Computer Networking of Consumer Fora in the Country (CONFONET)' was launched during the 10th Plan period in March 2005 at a cost of Rs. 48.64 crore.

Under the scheme, the Consumer Fora at all the three tiers throughout the country were to be fully computerized to enable access of information and quicker disposal of cases. The project is being implemented by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) on a turnkey basis.

The scheme has been extended during 11th Plan with a total outlay of Rs. 25.60 crore. In the extended period of project, stress is being laid upon continued HR support by means of Technical Support Personnels (TSPs) and training for eventual adoption of the system by the Consumer Fora themselves.

During the year 2011-12, an amount of Rs. 0.75 crore has been released to NIC for the activities to be undertaken under "CONFONET" Project in the XIth Plan. As on January 2012, out of 638 locations being covered, the CONFONET scheme is operational in 342 Consumer Fora. 268 Consumer Fora are uploading cause lists while 186 Consumer Fora are uploading judgments.