

service, telephone service should become very efficient and give consumer satisfaction. We are trying to do our best and our employees and workers in the services are willing to cooperate and we can do our best. I can assure you to improve our efficiency. But as you said, there are certain inherent requirements if you want to achieve excellence. Even in running when does a man achieve excellence? It is only when there is a target and competition with someone else. Unless there is a mark to be reached, the excellence will not be achieved. I want to introduce this element of competition in our country so that we can achieve excellence. That is our effort.

#### Implementation of the Consumer Protection Act

\*108. SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT : Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "Government going slow on consumer protection" appearing in the Hindustan Times of 9 December 1987;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereon; and

(c) what concrete steps are contemplated by Union Government to secure effective implementation of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI SUKH RAM) :  
(a) to (c) A statement is given below.

#### Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Government accords a high priority to the programme of consumer protection. To provide better protection to consumers and for speedy and inexpensive redressal of consumer grievances, the Government has brought into force the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Several steps have been taken to ensure that the statutory institutions envisaged in the Act are set up on priority basis. In this connection, meetings have been held with the Food Ministers and senior officers of States and UTs. Matter has been pursued vigorously through several letters, telex, telegrams, etc. The Central Government has constituted the Central Consumer Protection Council and is in process of setting up the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. Most of the States have already set up State level Consumer Protection Councils. Some States have already finalised actions for establishing the redressal machinery under the Act. The implementation is being closely pursued, co-ordinated and monitored.

[Translation]

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT :  
Mr. Speaker, Sir, the consumers are being badly exploited continuously in various ways in India. In view of that, the consumer Protection Act was passed in 1986. Two years have passed since then, but it seems as if Government has not taken any effective step in this regard. I want to know from the hon. Minister in how many States and in how many districts has the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, which was to be constituted in three tiers, been set up so far? According to the proposal, the entire network should have been completed within two years. I would like the hon. Minister to kindly enlighten us about this matter.

SHRI SUKH RAM : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it will not be appropriate to say that the Government has not taken any suitable step for implementing this law. After this Act was passed, rules were framed on 15-4-87 and thereafter the Central Consumers Protection Council was constituted on 1-6-87. It held its first meeting in Sept. and will hold its second meeting on 16th March. The Food Ministers of different States met in February, 1987 and thereafter in July 1987. Later sent several letters, telex messages etc to the States to set up Consumer Protection Councils at the earliest. So far, these councils

have been constituted in 20 States. If you want to know the names of those States, I can read out the names but it will take time. However, I can provide you a list of those names.

**MR. SPEAKER :** You may do so later on.

**SHRI SUKH RAM :** The Central Government has taken necessary steps for its implementation.

**SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT :** What about the network? Kindly give a complete answer.

**SHRI SUKH RAM :** I have already stated that Consumer Protection Councils have been set up in 20 States so far. The Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission and the forum have been set up in Bihar. As regards the other States, I have a list which indicates the action taken by each State in this regard and I can read it out if you so desire.

**SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT :** This is an important question and therefore, it requires careful planning. It is true that the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission is proposed and you have asked the States to set up such Commissions and some of them have even done it but has the Centre taken a lead in this matter which is well within its jurisdiction? If such bodies are not set up at the Central level, where shall the States send their grievances? We are aware that the Centre must have issued guidelines to the States regarding the people to be included in the Redressal Commissions that have been set up in those 20 States. For example, in West Bengal, the industry people have been included in this Commission. How can they protect the interests of the consumers? I feel that journalists and social workers should also be included in these councils. I would like to know what are the guidelines in this regard and whether the State Governments are following them? This Commission was set up at the Centre and in the States according to those guidelines and I would like to know how much time will it take to establish the same at the district level?

**SHRI SUKH RAM :** Mr. Speaker, Sir, so far as Centre is concerned, we have already set up the Consumer Protection Council here and as I have stated, the council had its first meeting in September last and guidelines have been issued to the State Governments in this regard which recommended that the consumers should be given maximum representation in these bodies. So far as West Bengal is concerned, I have noted your complaint. We will take up the matter with the State Government as per our guidelines. In case, the consumers are not given proper representation, we shall write to them.

*[English]*

**SHRI CHANDRA PRATAP NARAIN SINGH :** As far as protection to the consumer goes, the private sector is usually the culprit. But, Sir what does the Government propose to do with certain public sector companies which advertise their products but do not keep their products up to the mark. I would like to give an example because this leads to confusion amongst the consumers. Some companies have been floating shares to the public and they advertise in newspapers where they say that they are already in production. The example will have to be given otherwise I will not be able to clarify my point. Uptron, a Uttar Pradesh Public Sector Company, recently advertised for the manufacture of colour picture tubes and in the advertisement it said that it is already in production. However, in the small print where there the shares were advertised, it had shown as to how many colour picture tubes were yet to be imported from Japan. The entire colour picture tubes are being imported whereas the advertisement said that uptron is already in production. So, what does the Government propose to do with the erring public sector companies which are under the guidance and control of Government of India? Does the Government propose to take some action against companies like this as this will lead to confidence among the consumers when action is taken against their own public sector, advertising wrongly?

**SHRI SUKH RAM :** Sir, I may inform

the hon. Members that this Act applies to all the consumer goods and services and it covers all public, private, joint and cooperative sector organisations. Under the provision of this Act, there are quasi judicial forums right from the district level up to the Central level. We are trying our best that these institutions are set up as early as possible so that when the complaint comes, whether it relates to the public sector or the private sector, those quasi judicial forums will have every right to take cognizance of all the complaints. So, the moment these commissions come into existence, then action will be taken against all the defaulters.

**SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS :** Sir, I think the Hon. Minister has not given the clear picture. Sir, when this Bill was discussed and the Act was passed in the House, it was said that there will be two bodies, one is the prosecuting agency and the other is the quasi judicial courts. His question is whether it is implemented or not. The Prosecuting Agency which was to be constituted under the Companies Act and the voluntary organisations which were to be registered, I would like to know how many of them have been registered in India so far and also how many courts, as on today, are functioning since this Act came into force.

Also, I would like to tell my learned friend that the Food Corporation of India supplies sub-standard goods in various parts of the country. What action has been taken in this regard? I would like to have a categorical answer instead of beating about the bush.

**SHRI SUKH RAM :** Sir, as I said earlier, under this Act redressal machinery have to be constituted at the Central, State and the district level. So far they have not been constituted. We are trying our best and persuading the State governments to constitute these quasi-judicial bodies.

As far as the other protection to the consumer is concerned, there are certain other acts which are punitive in nature. But this is the only Act which is compensatory in nature. So, whenever the com-

plaints come and these forums or Commissions are constituted, then, they will start taking actions against the defaulters whether they are public sector companies or in the private sector.

**SHRI CHANDRA PRATAP NARAIN SINGH :** The hon. Member and I have asked a specific question whether any action has been taken by the Government? What will he do with the public sector companies of the Central Government?

**MR. SPEAKER :** Whenever it comes, it will be done.

#### Newsprint prices

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\*109. **SHRIMATI KISHORI SINHA :**  
**DR. A.K. PATEL :**

Will the Minister of **INDUSTRY** be pleased to state :

(a) whether the newsprint prices of public sector newsprint plants have been raised early this year;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) the effect of price rise on medium and small newspapers and magazines;

(d) whether the Associations of Newspapers have opposed this price rise; and

(e) whether any studies have been conducted into the cost structure of the newsprint industry?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) :** (a) to (c) A Statement is given below.

#### Statement

(a) and (b) There are five units in the country manufacturing newsprint. Two of them are Central Government Enterprises, two are State Government Enter-