

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

LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. *75
TO BE ANSWERED ON 07.02.2024

NATIONAL CONSUMER HELPLINE

*75. SHRI KANAKMAL KATARA: SHRI CHANDRA PRAKASH JOSHI:

Will the Minister of **CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION उपभोक्ता मामले, खाद्य और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री** be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) as an alternative dispute redressal mechanism, with particular focus on the number of grievances addressed, languages supported and modes of complaint registration;
- (b) the technological advancements that have been incorporated into the Centralized Consumer Grievance Redressal System to improve its efficiency and responsiveness; and
- (c) the manner in which the Ministry has ensured that complaints are addressed in a timely and effective manner?

ANSWER

उपभोक्ता मामले, खाद्य और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री
(श्री पीयूष गोयल)

THE MINISTER OF
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL)

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

STATEMENT REFERRED IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (c) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.*75 FOR 07.02.2024 REGARDING NATIONAL CONSUMER HELPLINE.

(a) to (c): The Department has revamped, the National Consumer Helpline(NCH) which has emerged as a single point of access to consumers across the country for grievance redressal at pre-litigation stage. Consumers can register their grievances from all over the country in 17 languages (i.e. Hindi, English, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Nepali, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Maithali, Santhali, Bengali, Odia, Assamese, Manipuri) 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- Whats App, SMS, mail, NCH app, web portal, Umang app as per their convenience.

This helpline works in a dedicated manner from 8 AM to 8 PM on all seven days of the week except national holidays. For this purpose, an exclusive call centre has been established and to facilitate increase of access to our consumers, callback facility is also available from 8 PM to 8 AM. Further, NCH has also partnered with prominent stakeholders, namely- private companies, regulators, ombudsman, government agencies to bring them altogether on a single online IT platform wherein all grievances are collated in a central repository with unique docket numbers. Currently 877 convergence partners are in collaboration with NCH to offer speedy resolution to consumer grievances.

Transformative changes and technological upgradation of the NCH has led to an exponential increase in the call handling facility of National Consumer Helpline. Number of calls received at NCH has exponentially increased by around 10 times from 14,795 in January, 2015 to 1,41,817 in January,2024. These initiatives taken by the Department have also encouraged consumers to register their grievances on the NCH which is manifested with an increase in the number of grievances registered at NCH.

The time frame for disposal of grievances received on the National Consumer Helpline is 45 days.

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, e-commerce markets etc. Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was repealed and Consumer Protection Act 2019 was enacted.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 provides for redressal of the grievances of consumer through specialized three-tier quasi-judicial agencies, now commonly known as ‘National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (NCDRC)’ at National level, ‘State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (SCDRC)’ at State level, and ‘District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission(DCDRC)’ at District level.

The Act also provides for, inter-alia, simplification of the adjudication process in the Consumer Commissions; filing of a complaint by a consumer in the Consumer Commission having jurisdiction with respect to his place of work/residence irrespective of place of transaction and place of business or residence of the opposite parties, e-filing and e-payment, video conferencing for hearing, deemed admissibility of complaints if admissibility is not decided within 21 days of filing; court monitored mediation to facilitate early disposal of cases; provision of product liability.

Provision for filing cases online through e-Daakhil has been introduced in NCDRC and Consumer Commissions of 35 States/UTs at the district and state level for speedy and hassle-free resolution of cases.

Section 38(7) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 prescribes that 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.

Department of Consumer Affairs has notified 17 Rules and 6 Regulations under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 for the protection of rights and interests of consumers which, inter-alia, includes E-Commerce Rules, Direct Selling) Rules, Mediation Rules, Search and Seizure and Compounding of offences by the Central Authority and Crediting of Penalty Rules etc.
