

PRESS RELEASE

The Hon'ble Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution chaired a Regional Consultation Meeting of the States & UTs of Southern region comprising the States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Union Territories Puducherry and Lakshadweep. The Hon'ble Minister, Food & Civil Supplies, Legal Metrology and Consumer Affairs Government of Karnataka was the Chief Guest of the meeting. Among others who attended the meeting included Shri G.Gurucharan, Special Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, Shri S.M.Kantakar, Member, National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Presidents and Registrars of State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Principal Secretaries of Departments of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs and Controllers of Legal Metrology.

2. The Focus of the regional consultation meeting was on review of :
 - i. Functioning of the Consumer dispute redressal mechanism at State. Commission and district fora level to ensure speedy and early disposal of the cases and reduce the pendency.
 - ii. Ensuring speedy, affordable and simple redressal of the grievances of the consumer.
 - iii. Better and effective implementation of the Essential Commodities Act, and the Prevention of Black Marketing Act to ensure adequate availability of the essential commodities to the consumer at reasonable prices.
 - iv. Better enforcement of the Legal Metrology Act/Rules to ensure value for money to the consumer.

3. The Hon'ble Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in his speech highlighted that the Consumer Courts have shown an overall disposal rate of 91%. However, the increase in pendency of cases and delays in disposal have been a cause of concern. In part this is due to non-filling up of vacancies of Presidents/Members in some Consumer Fora. Other reasons for pendency of cases are less remuneration, shortage of support staff and inadequacy of infrastructure. Incidentally, we are meeting at a juncture when major changes to Consumer Protection Act are under consideration. This will remove many bottle necks in procedure. Modernising the legislations administered by the Department in tune with time and necessitated by changes in economy, trade, business and Consumer expectation is thus the bedrock of the strategy of this Government towards Consumer Protection.

The amendments proposed by the Central Government included enhancement of the jurisdiction of pecuniary jurisdiction the Consumer Courts, simplification of procedures, enabling consumer to file their complaint online from

their house/from their place of residence, no need to engage advocates, provisions for mediation and providing for product liability on the part of the manufactures etc., He further outlined that with the co-operation of the States large quantities of pulses have been seized and released in market for controlling prices of pulses.

The Hon'ble Minister, Food & Civil Supplies, Legal Metrology, Consumer Affairs, Government of Karnataka, in his speech stated that their State was the first in the South to implement the Food Security Act in Jan, 2014 and covers as of now one crore and five lakh families. In addition to Wheat and Rice the State also provided Ragi, Jowar and one litre of edible oil under PDS. They have digitised the ration cards and detailed information are available online and will be linked to Adhaar and Voter Cards to avoid fraud.

He also stressed that effective functioning of the Consumer Forum by addressing the issues of filling up vacancies and amending of the Consumer Protection legislation by the centre.

He stated having proposed to the Centre for establishment of a National Institute / center for Consumer Study for research and case studies of Consumer Protection.

4. The meeting highlighted following outcome of the decision and measures taken by the Government of India with the co-operation and efforts of the states/UT of the southern region.

- In these seven states out of the total cases of 2,38,787 filed since inception, 2,16,301 cases have been disposed of since inception, the disposal amounting to about 91%
- A total of Rs.253.70 lakh has been release to the Southern States and UTs to State Consumer Helplines for ventilation of Consumer grievances.
- By effective implementation of Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Black Marketing Act, 12874 raids have been conducted in the States, 488 arrests have been made and goods of the value of Rs.1710.71 lakhs have been seized, during the year 2015 (upto 31-12-2015)
- The Legal Metrology Acts and Rules and being administered effectively through the state Controller of Legal Metrology to ensure the consumers value of their money.
- As regards the overall measures taken to control the rising prices of pules, since 19-10-2015 when special drive was taken, more than 14000 raids have been conducted by the States and about 1,30,000 metric tonne of pulses have been seized out of which about 1,00,000 metric tonne of pulses have been released to the market to enhance availability and control price of pulses.