

Report on the National Seminar on Consumer Protection and Awareness held on April 4, 2019.

Report on the National Seminar on 22-4-2019 and 23-4-2019 on CONSUMER PROTECTION AND AWARENESS.

IIPA TNRB Chennai in collaboration with Centre for Consumer Studies IIPA New Delhi organised the National Seminar at the Auditorium of Towers Club Anna Nagar Chennai.

The National Seminar was inaugurated by Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit on 22-4-2019 (Monday) at 10-30 am. Dr.D.Jothi Jagarajan.IAS.Retd, Vice Chairman of IIPA TNRB welcomed the gathering. Prof and Chief, Centre for Consumer Studies, IIPA New Delhi, Prof Suresh Misra in his felicitation address expressed happiness over the inauguration of such an important Seminar by the head of the State, the Hon'ble Governor and explained the sustainable role played by Centre for Consumer Studies IIPA. He expressed hope that the seminar would serve the purpose of spreading light on Consumer Protection Act and it's awareness among the people.

Thiru.P.R.Shanpath. IAS. Retd, Chairman, IIPA TNRB in his presidential address outlined the activities of TNRB with special emphasis on the celebration of Constitution Day with a **Short Lecture and Smart Quiz** in Colleges and Schools and distribution of prizes to motivate the student community. He also stated that civil services aspirants and research scholars were invited to participate in the monthly meetings and wide range of subjects relating to public administration were discussed.

Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit in his Inaugural address expressed appreciation to IIPA for the sustained efforts since 1950s in developing the skills and knowledge of civil servants and promoting a progressive work culture to transform the Administration and Governance. He impressed upon the emergence of Consumer era and the paradigmatic shift from Purchaser Beware to Sellers Beware owing to relentless services of agencies like Centre for Consumer Studies IIPA and other organisations in promoting Consumer satisfaction and welfare. Growing Consumer awareness and evolving Consumer Protection Act cannot be ignored.

He called upon the people to follow sustainable practices like minimalism and consume what is actually required and not to waste resources. This is essential to share the natural resources with all needy persons in the society. He pointed out that a consumer happy society is a real outcome of a contended Democratic society driven by positive values. He wanted the awareness of Consumer Rights and legal protection mechanism be taken to the rural areas and expressed desire that the deliberations in the seminar will achieve the intended goal.

S.S.Jawahar IAS Retd Hony Secretary IIPA TNRB proposed a vote of thanks and the Inaugural function came to an end.

In the he post tea session, Prof and Chief, Centre for Consumer Studies IIPA New Delhi, Prof. Suresh Misra gave a detailed overview on Consumer Protection and Empowerment. He explained with a power point presentation the details of Consumer Protection Act 1986 and its growing importance in the public administration. He explained the methods to be adopted and employed in empowering the consumers in a positive manner. He laid the foundation for the future course of action for the deliberations of the Seminar.

In the post lunch session, Dr. Mamta Pathania, Asst Professor of Public Administration- Centre for Consumer Studies, IIPA New Delhi, dealt with elaborately on Consumer Protection Education and Awareness with a power point presentation. She explained in detail various facets of Consumer education and the action needed to bring required awareness of the rights and how and how to secure them.

Thiru.P.Maruti. Secretary, Takkar Bapa Vidyalaya T.Nagar, Chennai a doyen in Gandhian Thoughts explained how Mahatma Gandhi viewed the customers and recalled his methods of need based consumption and how to bring in ethical standards in ensuring Consumer satisfaction and welfare.

This was followed by a panel discussion on the problems of Consumers in the state. The panel consisted of the following personalities from different walks of Life.

Dr. Jayashree Ghosh

Principal, Anna Adarsh College for Women, Anna Nagar Chennai 40.

Thiru.D.Soundara Rajan Retd District Revenue Officer and President, Consumer Welfare Council, Chennai.

Thiru. Shivasankar, State Secretary, Southern Consumer People Protection Movement, Chennai and

Dr. Inderjeet Singh Sodhi,

Professor, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu

replied to the questions and doubts raised by the audience. Dr. Jayashree Ghosh, explained the need to educate and empower women about the Consumer Protection and create awareness on their rights and methods of redressal of grievances as women are major consumers. Dr.Sodhi of RGNIYD explained how the advertisements misguide the buyers and how a vigilant buyer can avoid getting lured by fake claims made in the advertisements and announcements of

products. He explained the action that can be taken against such advertisements. Thiru.D.Soundara Rajan explained that a spirit of enquiry and a sense of awareness will lead to greater Consumer Activism in the State.

With this the proceedings of Day 1 came to an end.

On 23-4-2019, Mrs.S. Madhumathi IAS, Commissioner of Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, Government of Tamil Nadu, gave a detailed lecture with a powerpoint on **Consumer Awareness and Education**. She explained in details the steps taken by the state government in respect of Public Distribution System and how Consuming Public can make use of the channels available to protect their rights. She explained that the consumers should also realise their responsibility and never hesitate to report misdeeds at the fair price shops and delivery of Government welfare schemes and technology has been leveraged fully by the Government and the department in this regard. She explained that Tamil Nadu tops in the formation of the **Consumer Clubs** in almost all Schools and Colleges in the State. She explained that the grant of Rs.5000/- made to these clubs were effectively utilized and the momentum of Protection of Consumer Rights has taken deep roots and will usher in an era of heightened Consumer satisfaction and welfare.

Dr.M.Kannan, Central Designated Officer, and Thiru.Chezhan, Technical Officer of **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India**, Southern Region, Chennai explained with a powerpoint the objectives of the Authority and how it functions in setting safety standards for food products and Food suppliers and how periodical and surprise checks are held. He explained new schemes like Prevention of Reused Cooking Oil (RUCO) and such oil will be ultimately diverted

for making Biofuel. The Authority has taken several steps to address the issues relating to fast food, nutritionless food and unhygienic food.

Thiru.A.Asokan, Senior Advocate, Salem District spoke on the topic of **Media and Consumers**. He used a powerpoint to explain the various provisions of the Consumer Protection Act and how to find **redressal for deficiency in Product or Service** under the Act. He explained the role of Media in desisting from publishing or broadcasting or telecasting misleading advertisements and Media has same responsibility in providing quality news and programs to the Public.

Thiru. Sreerangan, Senior Advocate, Madras High Court next deliberated upon the various **consumer redressal forums** available at National, State and District level depending upon the value of compensation. He explained with a powerpoint as to the amendments proposed in the new bill of 2018 and that its early passage will empower the Consumers in tune with the time.

Thiru. K.Rajendran, Vice President of Indian Oil corporation Limited dealers association and a Retail Dealer and Transporter spoke on the **Petroleum products and Consumer rights**. He explained the measures prescribed by the Company and how they have to be implemented by them from receipt of petrol and diesel at the retail point to the delivery to consumers in ensuring quality and quantity. The aim is zero tolerance in service. He explained that the staff were trained in good customer service practices and how grievances are addressed if any, instantly as otherwise IOC calls for remarks and takes action on the dealer. He said that complaints relating to short supply has been completely eliminated with the use of technology. He said that the awareness is heightened and they have to provide restroom with running water facility. He stated that only method to retain the volume of business is customer satisfaction

Mrs.G.Bhavani. Scientist-E, Bureau of Indian Standards, Chennai explained with a power point the methodology of fixing standards for products other than food items. She explained the methods of Hallmark standards for Gold and Golden jewellery, ISI for manufacturing products, AgMark for agricultural products and Plastic standards for PET bottles and environmental norms for all plastic products. The Standards are being raised periodically on par with international standards and regulations to achieve the SDGs. She also told how the periodical and surprise inspections are done to verify the production and process standards. She explained that more awareness on the part of Consumer will bring in desired results.

With this, the deliberations of the Seminar came to an end. At the end of the lecture a barrage of questions were raised and the presenters gave replies.

The valedictory function of the National Seminar was held between 4-30 pm and 5-15 pm. Thiru.S S.Jawahar IAS Retd Hony Secretary IIPA TNRB welcomed the gathering. Prof.Suresh Misra of CCS, IIPA New Delhi gave a summing-up of the proceedings of the Seminar and praised the TNRB in organising the seminar in a purposeful and useful manner. He expected that it will provide further impetus to the consumer movement.

Hon'ble Justice. Thiru. S.Rajeswaran, former judge of Madras High Court presided over the valedictory function and distributed the certificates of participation to the participating students through the heads of the institutions and delivered his valedictory address. He explained that consumer law is totally different from civil litigations and that is why summary trials have been prescribed. The presiding officers of Consumer Grievances Redressal forums should be suitably

trained in quick and just disposal bringing meaning to the intentions of the law. He explained that the procedural delay inevitable in civil cases should be totally avoided to protect the safety and interests of the consumers. He also stated that seeking justice in consumer redressal cases need proof and hence the consumers must obtain the receipts for the purchases and present them to the forum. He explained that the consumers themselves or their representatives of consumer protection organisations can appear in person and there is no need for the presence of lawyer in minor cases. He congratulated the IIPA apex body and TNRB for organising this Seminar. With Dr. D.Jothi Jagarajan IAS Retd Vice Chairman IIPA TNRB proposing a vote of thanks the event came to an end.

Information provided by-

S.S.Jawahar.IAS.Retd Hony Secretary IIPA TNRB Chennai