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Year End Review 2020- (Department of Consumer Affairs) Ministry of Consumer Affairs,
Food & Public Distribution

The major highlights of the Department of Consumer Affairs during the year 2020 are as follows:

I. CONSUMER PROTECTION

- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 which has replaced the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 were notified in July, 2020. The relevant Rules and Regulations, including the E-Commerce Rules, which specify the duties and obligations of sellers and e-commerce entities were also notified.
- With the notification of rules, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to regulate matters relating to violation of rights of consumers, unfair trade practices and false or misleading advertisements and to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class has become functional.
- In pursuance of Rule 8 of the Consumer Protection (Consumer disputes Redressal Commission) Rules, 2020, an online portal <https://edaakhil.nic.in> has been launched on September 7, 2020 for electronic filing of consumer cases in the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.

II. COVID 19 RELATED INITIATIVES

Under the Essential Commodities Act

- Masks (2 ply & 3 ply surgical marks, N95 marks) and Hand sanitizers were added in the list of Essential commodities under the Essential Commodities Act for the period up to 30.6.2020 to ensure their availability and stop hoarding / short supply.
- The prices of alcohol used in manufacturing of hand sanitizers were regulated.
- The ceiling prices of masks (2 ply & 3 ply), Melt blown non-woven fabric and hand sanitizers were fixed to ensure their easy availability.

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana

- As a part of Economic response to COVID 19 to ameliorate the hardships faced by the poor due to economic disruption caused by COVID 19, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), a special package which included provision of one kg per family of NFSA beneficiaries, of pulses like moong, tur, chana and urad was approved for 3 months from April to June to ensure adequate availability of protein to the poor. 5.48 LMT was distributed to 18.3 crore beneficiary households.
- In June, the PMGKAY package was extended beyond the initial period of 3 months until the end of November, 2020. During this five-month period, 1 kg free whole chana was provided to each family per month free of cost to NFSA beneficiaries' households. About 6.57 LMT was distributed for these 5 months.

Atma Nirbhar Bharat package

- In order to mitigate the sufferings of migrant labour, under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat package, a provision was made for supply of 2 kg of whole chana from Government buffer stocks per migrant worker family who were not covered under the National Food Security

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Act or were without ration card in the State / UT in which they were stranded. 1.66 LMT was distributed among 1.66 crore beneficiaries' households.

III. EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

- During Covid-19, in order to protect the interest of consumers, advisory was issued extending for a period of six months in two phases, the time allowed for verification and stamping of weights and measures.
- Due to prevalent condition of COVID-19, manufacturers/ packers were allowed to utilise the packaging material / wrapper with pre-printed date of manufacturing up to 30.09.2020 which could not be exhausted within the time limit prescribed under Rules,
- Due to extraordinary situation of lockdown for containment of COVID-19 spread and to ease out the difficulties of industry, BIS gave temporary relaxations in the provisions of BIS Regulations, Schemes and Guidelines including providing special benefits of approximately 54.38 crores for the licensees of BIS from MSME manufacturing sector through rebates and reduction in application fees.
- An online system of registration and renewal of jewelers and online system of recognition and renewal of recognition of Assaying and Hallmarking centres was launched.
- **Renewal of License under EC Act-** To mitigate the concerns regarding requirement of annual/periodic renewal of license under EC Act and improve ease of doing business, as well as to provide thrust to 'Make in India', all the administrative Ministries/Departments concerned have issued necessary orders to ensure the validity of licenses would be for at least five years from the date of issue of existing license.
- **Amendment to the Essential Commodities Act:** - The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act. 2020 was notified on 27th September, 2020 after having been passed by both the Houses of Parliament. The Amendment of 65 year old Essential Commodities Act which deregulates cereals, edible oils, pulses, oilseeds, potato and onion is a visionary step which would radically alter the incomes and growth prospects of farmers by providing exemption for contract farming purchasers, increased validity of licenses under EC Act etc. It will also transform the agri-sector by helping double the income and growth prospects of farmers by incentivizing investment in the entire supply chain of agri-horticultural produce. Bureau of Indian Standard has been asked to develop standards for warehousing and storage infrastructure so that investment in supply chain management gets a boost after the de-regulation of the said agri-foodstuffs.
- Decision taken to amend the Order dated 29.09.2016 to exempt contract farming purchaser- registered under the concerned State/UT Agricultural Produce & Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion & Facilitation) Act, from stock limits to the extent of quantity purchased under contract farming. This would promote investment in agriculture and agro-processing industry thereby helping achieve the objective of doubling farmer's income.

IV. PRICE STABILIZATION FUND (PSF)

- Under PSF, building buffer stock of pulses up to 20 lakh MT was approved for effective market intervention and about 8.5 Lakh farmers were benefitted through purchase of pulses at MSP for the buffer.

Pulses from Buffer were utilised for Public Distribution System, Mid-day Meal scheme and Integrated Child Development Scheme.

- Pulses from the buffer were also utilized to meet the requirement of Army and Central Para-Military Forces which has ensured ease in sourcing, quality, regular and timely supplies as well as institutionalizing regular channel for disposal of buffer thereto.
- Pulses were released in open market to enhance availability and moderate prices of pulses.
- 1 LMT of Buffer stock of onions was procured under the Price Stabilization Fund.
- Supply of onions from the buffer stock was undertaken through agencies like Safal, Kendriya Bhandar and State agencies to cool down prices.

V. BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS (BIS)

- In line with the Government's vision of **Atma Nirbhar Bharat** and **Ease of Doing Business** for various stakeholders such as consumers, industry, laboratories, etc., BIS has actively progressed towards automating all its activities through development and implementation of software applications/online portals under the e-BIS project (www.manakonline.in). The e-BIS has been envisaged encompassing all activities of BIS and with advanced features like data analytics, artificial intelligence, better MIS for effective monitoring, user-friendly interfaces, etc.
- A Standards Portal has been developed for digitization of the Standards formulation process. The portal has made standards accessible and free to the stakeholders.
- In order to mainstream standards and quality parameters, BIS has taken up with the IITs for Integration of Standards in the Curriculum of Technical Education.”
- Quality Control Orders or Technical Regulations specify requirements for mandatory compliance to a standard or essential requirement. Presently, 263 products covering 270 Indian Standards are covered under Mandatory Certification (ISI Mark) by BIS under QCOs issued by various Ministries/ Departments.
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- 61 Information Technology & Solar Products covering 29 Indian Standards are covered under the Compulsory Registration Scheme by BIS under QCOs issued by MeitY & MNRE.
- Quality Control Order for mandatory Hallmarking of Gold Hallmarking and Gold Artefacts order, 2020 was notified making hallmarking of Gold jewellery and artifacts mandatory in the country which shall come into effect from 1st June, 2021.

VI. Media activities

- During the year, significant joint campaigns in Print media were carried out with the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India against fraudulent offers for installing mobile towers on their property and the Reserve Bank of India for accepting coins in different designs in same denomination on Pan-India basis in Hindi, English and Regional languages.
- An awareness campaign through print media was also carried out during outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic for making general public aware about grievance redressal mechanism on matters related to maintaining essential supplies for management of COVID-19

logistics. It also advised manufacturers and retailers on steps to be taken and points to be taken care of to help ensure maintenance of essential supplies for management of COVID-19 logistics.

- Department distributed and featured a video film on PMGKAY to the Panchayats to increase publicity and awareness about the benefits of the Yojana to NFSA beneficiaries. State Governments and Department of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India helped in running the video film in Panchayats in local languages.
- Special consumer awareness campaigns through posters, audio-clippings and video films on the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and how to register complaints on the National Consumer Helpline have been undertaken with the help of Department of Panchayati Raj, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Post offices and State Governments for display of material on their buildings.

VII. National Test House

- National Test House which works in the field of testing, evaluation and quality control of various engineering materials and finished products created high technology test facilities in its regional offices. It has also procured new instruments such as Power Quality Analyzer, Cement Autoclave, Thermal Endurance Chamber, DC High Voltage Insulation Tester etc.

