

CONSUMER PROTECTION COUNCILS

1. **The Central Consumer Protection Council.**—(1) The Central Government **shall**, by notification, establish with effect from such date as it may specify in such notification, a Council to be known as the Central Consumer Protection Council (hereinafter referred to as the Central Council).
 - (2) The Central Council shall consist of the following members, namely:—
 - (a) the Minister in charge of the consumer affairs in the Central Government, who shall be its Chairman, and
 - (b) such number of other official or non-official members representing such interests as may be prescribed.
2. **Procedure for meetings of the Central Council.**—(1) The Central Council shall meet as and when necessary, but at least one meeting of the Council shall be held every year.
 - (2) The Central Council shall meet at such time and place as the Chairman may think fit and shall observe such procedure in regard to the transaction of its business as may be prescribed.
3. **Objects of the Central Council.**—The objects of the Central Council shall be to promote and protect the rights of the consumers such as,—
 - (a) the right to be protected against the marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property;
 - (b) the right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, as the case may be so as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices;
 - (c) the right to be assured, wherever possible, access to a variety of goods and services at competitive prices;
 - (d) the right to be heard and to be assured that consumer's interests will receive due consideration at appropriate forums;
 - (e) the right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices or restrictive trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers; and
 - (f) the right to consumer education.
4. **The State Consumer Protection Councils.**— (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish with effect from such date as it may specify in such notification, a Council to be known as the Consumer Protection Council for..... (hereinafter referred to as the State Council).
 - (2) The State Council shall consist of the following members, namely:—
 - (a) the Minister in charge of consumer affairs in the State Government who shall be its Chairman;
 - (b) such number of other official or non-official members representing such interests as may be prescribed by the State Government.
 - (c) **such number of other official or non-official members, not exceeding ten, as may be nominated by the Central Government.**
 - (3) The State Council shall meet as and when necessary but not less than two meetings shall be held every year.
 - (4) The State Council shall meet at such time and place as the Chairman may think fit and shall observe such procedure in regard to the transaction of its business as may be prescribed by the State Government.
5. **Objects of the State Council.** — The objects of every State Council shall be to promote and protect within the State the rights of the consumers laid down in clauses (a) to (f) of section 6.
- 5A. (1) **The State Government shall establish for every district, by notification, a council to be known as the District Consumer Protection Council with effect from such date as it may specify in such notification.**

- (2) *The District Consumer Protection Council (hereinafter referred to as the District Council) shall consist of the following members, namely:—*
- (a) *the Collector of the district (by whatever name called), who shall be its Chairman; and*
- (b) *such number of other official and non-official members representing such interests as may be prescribed by the State Government.*
- (3) *The District Council shall meet as and when necessary but not less than two meetings shall be held every year.*
- (4) *The District Council shall meet at such time and place within the district as the Chairman may think fit and shall observe such procedure in regard to the transaction of its business as may be prescribed by the State Government.*

5B. The objects of every District Council shall be to promote and protect within the district the rights of the consumers laid down in clauses (a) to (f) of section 6.

CHAPTER III

CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL AGENCIES

- 6. Establishment of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies.** - There shall be established for the purposes of this Act, the following agencies, namely:—
- (a) a Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum to be known as the "District Forum" established by the State Government in each district of the State by notification:
 Provided that the State Government may, if it deems fit, establish more than one District Forum in a district.
- (b) a Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission to be known as the "State Commission" established by the State Government in the State by notification; and
- (c) a National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission established by the Central Government by notification.
- 7. Composition of the District Forum.** — (1) Each District Forum shall consist of,—
- (a) a person who is, or has been, or is qualified to be a District Judge, who shall be its President;
- (b) *two other members, one of whom shall be a woman, who shall have the following qualifications, namely:—*
- (i) *be not less than thirty-five years of age,*
- (ii) *possess a bachelor's degree from a recognised university,*
- (iii) *be persons of ability, integrity and standing, and have adequate knowledge and experience of at least ten years in dealing with problems relating to economics, law, commerce, accountancy, industry, public affairs or administration:*
- Provided that a person shall be disqualified for appointment as a member if he—*
- (a) *has been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for an offence which, in the opinion of the state Government involves moral turpitude; or*
- (b) *is an undischarged insolvent; or*
- (c) *is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court; or*
- (d) *has been removed or dismissed from the service of the Government or a body corporate owned or controlled by the Government; or*
- (e) *has, in the opinion of the state Government, such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially the discharge by him of his functions as a member; or*
- (f) *has such other disqualifications as may be prescribed by the State Government;*

(1A) Every appointment under sub-section (1) shall be made by the State Government on the recommendation of a selection committee consisting of the following, namely:—

- (i) the President of the State Commission — Chairman.
- (ii) Secretary, Law Department of the State — Member.
- (iii) Secretary incharge of the Department dealing with consumer affairs in the State — Member.

Provided that where the President of the State Commission is, by reason of absence or otherwise, unable to act as Chairman of the Selection Committee, the State Government may refer the matter to the Chief Justice of the High Court for nominating a sitting Judge of that High Court to act as Chairman.

(2) Every member of the District Forum shall hold office for a term of five years or up to the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier:

Provided that a member shall be eligible for re-appointment for another term of five years or up to the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier, subject to the condition that he fulfills the qualifications and other conditions for appointment mentioned in clause (b) of sub-section (1) and such re-appointment is also made on the basis of the recommendation of the Selection Committee:

Provided further that a member may resign his office in writing under his hand addressed to the State Government and on such resignation being accepted, his office shall become vacant and may be filled by appointment of a person possessing any of the qualifications mentioned in sub-section (1) in relation to the category of the member who is required to be appointed under the provisions of sub-section (1A) in place of the person who has resigned:

Provided also that a person appointed as the President or as a member, before the commencement of the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act, 2002, shall continue to hold such office as President or member, as the case may be, till the completion of his term.

(3) The salary or honorarium and other allowances payable to, and the other terms and conditions of service of the members of the District Forum shall be such as may be prescribed by the State Government.

Provided that the appointment of a member on whole-time basis shall be made by the State Government on the recommendation of the President of the State Commission taking into consideration such factors as may be prescribed including the work load of the District Forum.

8. Jurisdiction of the District Forum.—(1) Subject to the other provisions of this Act, the District Forum shall have jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services and the compensation, if any, claimed "does not exceed rupees **twenty lakhs**.

(2) A complaint shall be instituted in a District Forum within the local limits of whose jurisdiction,—

- (a) the opposite party or each of the opposite parties, where there are more than one, at the time of the institution of the complaint, actually and voluntarily resides or carries on business or has a branch office or personally works for gain, or
- (b) any of the opposite parties, where there are more than one, at the time of the institution of the complaint, actually and voluntarily resides, or carries on business or has a branch office, or personally works for gain, provided that in such case either the permission of the District Forum is given, or the opposite parties who do not reside, or carry on business or have a branch office, or personally work for gain, as the case may be, acquiesce in such institution; or
- (c) the cause of action, wholly or in part, arises.

9. Manner in which complaint shall be made.—(1) A complaint in relation to any goods sold or delivered or agreed to be sold or delivered or any service provided or agreed to be provided may be filed with a District Forum by –

- (a) ***the consumer to whom such goods are sold or delivered or agreed to be sold or delivered or such service provided or agreed to be provided;***

- (b) *any recognised consumer association whether the consumer to whom the goods sold or delivered or agreed to be sold or delivered or service provided or agreed to be provided is a member of such association or not;*
 - (c) *one or more consumers, where there are numerous consumers having the same interest, with the permission of the District Forum, on behalf of, or for the benefit of, all consumers so interested; or*
 - (d) *the Central Government or the State Government, as the case may be, either in its individual capacity or as a representative of interests of the consumers in general.*
- (2) *Every complaint filed under sub-section (1) shall be accompanied with such amount of fee and payable in such manner as may be prescribed.*
- (3) *On receipt of a complaint made under sub-section (1), the District Forum may, by order, allow the complaint to be proceeded with or rejected:*
Provided that a complaint shall not be rejected under this section unless an opportunity of being heard has been given to the complainant:
Provided further that the admissibility of the complaint shall ordinarily be decided within twenty-one days from the date on which the complaint was received.
- (4) *Where a complaint is allowed to be proceeded with under sub-section (3), the District Forum may proceed with the complaint in the manner provided under this Act:*
Provided that where a complaint has been admitted by the District Forum, it shall not be transferred to any other court or tribunal or any authority set up by or under any other law for the time being in force.

Explanation. - For the purpose of this section "recognised consumer association" means any voluntary consumer association registered under the Companies Act, 1956 or any other law for the time being in force".

10. Procedure on admission of complaint. — (1) The District Forum shall, on admission of a complaint, if it relates to any goods,—

- (a) *refer a copy of the admitted complaint, within twenty-one days from the date of its admission to the opposite party mentioned in the complaint directing him to give his version of the case within a period of thirty days or such extended period not exceeding fifteen days as may be granted by the District Forum;*
- (b) *where the opposite party on receipt of a complaint referred to him under clause (a) denies or disputes the allegations contained in the complaint, or omits or fails to take any action to represent his case within the time given by the District Forum, the District Forum shall proceed to settle the consumer dispute in the manner specified in clauses (c) to (g);*
- (c) *where the complaint alleges a defect in the goods which cannot be determined without proper analysis or test of the goods, the District Forum shall obtain a sample of the goods from the complainant, seal it and authenticate it in the manner prescribed and refer the sample so sealed to the appropriate laboratory along with a direction that such laboratory make an analysis or test, whichever may be necessary, with a view to finding out whether such goods suffer from any defect alleged in the complaint or from any other defect and to report its findings thereon to the District Forum within a period of forty-five days of the receipt of the reference or within such extended period as may be granted by the District Forum;*
- (d) *before any sample of the goods is referred to any appropriate laboratory under clause (c), the District Forum may require the complainant to deposit to the credit of the Forum such fees as may be specified, for payment to the appropriate laboratory for carrying out the necessary analysis or test in relation to the goods in question;*
- (e) *the District Forum shall remit the amount deposited to its credit under clause (d) to the appropriate laboratory to enable it to carry out the analysis or test mentioned in clause (c) and on receipt of the report from the appropriate laboratory, the District*

Forum shall forward a copy of the report along with such remarks as the District Forum may feel appropriate to the opposite party;

- (f) if any of the parties disputes the correctness of the findings of the appropriate laboratory, or disputes the correctness of the methods of analysis or test adopted by the appropriate laboratory, the District Forum shall require the opposite party or the complainant to submit in writing his objections in regard to the report made by the appropriate laboratory;
 - (g) the District Forum shall thereafter give a reasonable opportunity to the complainant as well as the opposite party of being heard as to the correctness or otherwise of the report made by the appropriate laboratory and also as to the objection made in relation thereto under clause (f) and issue an appropriate order under section 14.
- (2) the District Forum shall, if the complaint admitted by it under section 12 relates to goods in respect of which the procedure specified in sub-section (1) cannot be followed, or if the complaint relates to any services,—**
- (a) refer a copy of such complaint to the opposite party directing him to give his version of the case within a period of thirty days or such extended period not exceeding fifteen days as may be granted by the District Forum;
 - (b) where the opposite party, on receipt of a copy of the complaint, referred to him under clause (a) denies or disputes the allegations contained in the complaint, or omits or fails to take any action to represent his case within the time given by the District Forum, the District Forum shall proceed to settle the consumer dispute,—
 - (i) on the basis of evidence brought to its notice by the complainant and the opposite party, where the opposite party denies or disputes the allegations contained in the complaint, or
 - (ii) ***ex parte*** on the basis of evidence brought to its notice by the complainant where the opposite party omits or fails to take any action to represent his case within the time given by the Forum.
 - (c) where the complainant fails to appear on the date of hearing before the District Forum, the District Forum may either dismiss the complaint for default or decide it on merits.
- (3) No proceedings complying with the procedure laid down in subsections [1] and [2] shall be called in question in any court on the ground that the principles of natural justice have not been complied with.
- (3A) Every complaint shall be heard 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:**
- Provided that no adjournment shall be ordinarily granted by the District Forum unless sufficient cause is shown and the reasons for grant of adjournment have been recorded in writing by the Forum:***
- Provided further that the District Forum shall make such orders as to the costs occasioned by the adjournment as may be provided in the regulations made under this Act.***
- Provided also that in the event of a complaint being disposed of after the period so specified, the District Forum shall record in writing, the reasons for the same at the time of disposing of the said complaint.***
- (3B) Where during the pendency of any proceeding before the District Forum, it appears to it necessary, it may pass such interim order as is just and proper in the facts and circumstances of the case.
- (4) For the purposes of this section, the District Forum shall have the same powers as are vested in a civil court under Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 while trying a suit in respect of the following matters, namely:—
- (i) the summoning and enforcing the attendance of any defendant or witness and examining the witness on oath;

- (ii) the discovery and production of any document or other material object producible as evidence;
 - (iii) the reception of evidence on affidavits;
 - (iv) the requisitioning of the report of the concerned analysis or test from the appropriate laboratory or from any other relevant source;
 - (v) issuing of any commission for the examination of any witness, and
 - (vi) any other matter which may be prescribed.
- (5) Every proceeding before the District Forum shall be deemed to be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Code (45 of 1860), and the District Forum shall be deemed to be a civil court for the purposes of section 195, and Chapter XXVI of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974).
- (6) Where the complainant is a consumer referred to in sub-clause (iv) of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 2, the provisions of rule 8 of Order I of the First Schedule to the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908) shall apply subject to the modification that every reference therein to a suit or decree shall be construed as a reference to a complaint or the order of the District Forum thereon.
- (7) In the event of death of a complainant who is a consumer or of the opposite party against whom the complaint has been filed, the provisions of Order XXII of the First Schedule to the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908) shall apply subject to the modification that every reference therein to the plaintiff and the defendant shall be construed as reference to a complainant or the opposite party, as the case may be.

11. Finding of the District Forum. — (1) If, after the proceeding conducted under section 13, the District Forum is satisfied that the goods complained against suffer from any of the defects specified in the complaint or that any of the allegations contained in the complaint about the services are proved, it shall issue an order to the opposite party directing him to do one or more of the following things, namely:—

- (a) to remove the defect pointed out by the appropriate laboratory from the goods in question;
- (b) to replace the goods with new goods of similar description which shall be free from any defect;
- (c) to return to the complainant the price, or, as the case may be, the charges paid by the complainant;
- (d) to pay such amount as may be awarded by it as compensation to the consumer for any loss or injury suffered by the consumer due to the negligence of the opposite party.

Provided that the District Forum shall have the power to grant punitive damages in such circumstances as it deems fit;

- (e) to remove the defects in goods or deficiencies in the services in question;
- (f) to discontinue the unfair trade practice or the restrictive trade practice or not to repeat it;
- (g) not to offer the hazardous goods for sale;
- (h) to withdraw the hazardous goods from being offered for sale;

(ha) to cease manufacture of hazardous goods and to desist from offering services which are hazardous in nature;

(hb) to pay such sum as may be determined by it if it is of the opinion that loss or injury has been suffered by a large number of consumers who are not identifiable conveniently:

Provided that the minimum amount of sum so payable shall not be less than five per cent. of the value of such defective goods sold or service provided, as the case may be, to such consumers:

Provided further that the amount so obtained shall be credited in favour of such person and utilized in such manner as may be prescribed;

(hc) to issue corrective advertisement to neutralize the effect of misleading advertisement at the cost of the opposite party responsible for issuing such misleading advertisement;

(i) to provide for adequate costs to parties.

(2) Every proceeding referred to in sub-section (1) shall be conducted by the President of the District Forum and at least one member thereof sitting together:

Provided that where a member, for any reason, is unable to conduct a proceeding till it is completed, the President and the other member shall continue the proceeding from the stage at which it was last heard by the previous member.

(2A) Every order made by the District Forum under sub-section (1) shall be signed by its President and the member or members who conducted the proceeding:

Provided that where the proceeding is conducted by the President and one member and they differ on any point or points, they shall state the point or points on which they differ and refer the same to the other member for hearing on such point or points and the opinion of the majority shall be the order of the District Forum.

(3) Subject to the foregoing provisions, the procedure relating to the conduct of the meetings of the District Forum, its sittings and other matters shall be such as may be prescribed by the State Government.

12. Appeal. — Any person aggrieved by an order made by the District Forum may prefer an appeal against such order to the State Commission within a period of thirty days from the date of the order, in such form and manner as may be prescribed:

Provided that the State Commission may entertain an appeal after the expiry of the said period of thirty days if it is satisfied that there was sufficient cause for not finding it within that period.

Provided further that no appeal by a person, who is required to pay any amount in terms of an order of the District Forum, shall be entertained by the State Commission unless the appellant has deposited in the prescribed manner fifty per cent. of that amount or twenty-five thousand rupees, whichever is less:

13. Composition of the State Commission. — (1) Each State Commission shall consist of—

(a) a person who is or has been a Judge of a High Court, appointed by the State Government, who shall be its President:

Provided that no appointment under this clause shall be made except after consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court;

(b) **not less than two, and not more than such number of members, as may be prescribed, and one of whom shall be a woman, who shall have the following qualifications, namely:—**

(i) **be not less than thirty-five years of age;**

(ii) **possess a bachelor's degree from a recognised university; and**

(iii) **be persons of ability, integrity and standing, and have adequate knowledge and experience of at least ten years in dealing with problems relating to economics, law, commerce, accountancy, industry, public affairs or administration:**

Provided that not more than fifty per cent. of the members shall be from amongst persons having a judicial background.

Explanation. — **For the purposes of this clause, the expression "persons having judicial background" shall mean persons having knowledge and experience for at least a period of ten years as a presiding officer at the district level court or any tribunal at equivalent level:**

Provided further that a person shall be disqualified for appointment as a member if he—

(a) **has been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for an offence which, in the opinion of the State Government, involves moral turpitude; or**

(b) **is an undischarged insolvent; or**

- (c) *is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court; or*
- (d) *has been removed or dismissed from the service of the Government or a body corporate owned or controlled by the Government; or*
- (e) *has, in the opinion of the State Government, such financial or other interest, as is likely to affect prejudicially the discharge by him of his functions as a member; or*
- (f) *has such other disqualifications as may be prescribed by the State Government.*

(1A) *Every appointment under sub-section (1) shall be made by the State Government on the recommendation of a Selection Committee consisting of the following members, namely:—*

- (i) *President of the State Commission* -- *Chairman;*
- (ii) *Secretary of the Law Department of the State* -- *Member;*
- (iii) *Secretary incharge of the Department dealing with Consumer Affairs in the State* -- *Member:*

Provided that where the President of the State Commission is, by reason of absence or otherwise, unable to act as Chairman of the Selection Committee, the State Government may refer the matter to the Chief Justice of the High Court for nominating a sitting Judge of that High Court to act as Chairman.

- (1B)(i) *The jurisdiction, powers and authority of the State Commission may be exercised by Benches thereof.*
- (ii) *A Bench may be constituted by the President with one or more members as the President may deem fit.*
- (iii) *If the members of a Bench differ in opinion on any point, the points shall be decided according to the opinion of the majority, if there is a majority, but if the Members are equally divided, they shall state the point or points on which they differ, and make a reference to the President who shall either hear the point or points himself or refer the case for hearing on such point or points by one or more of the other members and such point or points shall be decided according to the opinion of the majority of the members who have heard the case, including those who first heard it.*

- (2) *The salary or honorarium and other allowances payable to, and the other terms and conditions of service of, the members of the State Commission shall be such as may be prescribed by the State Government.*

Provided that the appointment of a member on whole-time basis shall be made by the State Government on the recommendation of the President of the State Commission taking into consideration such factors as may be prescribed including the work load of the State Commission.

- (3) *Every member of the State Commission shall hold office for a term of five years or up to the age of sixty-seven years, whichever is earlier:*

Provided that a member shall be eligible for re-appointment for another term of five years or up to the age of sixty-seven years, whichever is earlier, subject to the condition that he fulfills the qualifications and other conditions for appointment mentioned in clause (b) of sub-section (1) and such re-appointment is made on the basis of the recommendation of the Selection Committee:

Provided further that a person appointed as a President of the State Commission shall also be eligible for re-appointment in the manner provided in clause (a) of sub-section (1) of this section:

Provided also that a member may resign his office in writing under his hand addressed to the State Government and on such resignation being accepted, his office shall become vacant and may be filled by appointment of a person possessing any of the qualifications mentioned in sub-section (1) in relation to the category of

the member who is required to be appointed under the provisions of sub-section (1A) in place of the person who has resigned.

(4) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (3), a person appointed as the President or as a member, before the commencement of the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act, 2002, shall continue to hold such office as President or member, as the case may be, till the completion of his term.

14. Jurisdiction of the State Commission. — (1) Subject to the other provisions of this Act, the State Commission shall have jurisdiction—

(a) to entertain—

(i) complaints where the value of the goods or services and compensation, if any, claimed exceeds rupees ***twenty lakhs*** but does not exceed rupees ***one crore***; and

(ii) appeals against the orders of any District Forum within the State; and

(b) to call for the records and pass appropriate orders in any consumer dispute which is pending before or has been decided by any District Forum within the State, where it appears to the State Commission that such District Forum has exercised a jurisdiction not vested in it by law, or has failed to exercise a jurisdiction so vested or has acted in exercise of its jurisdiction illegally or with material irregularity.

(2) A complaint shall be instituted in a State Commission within the limits of whose jurisdiction,—

(a) the opposite party or each of the opposite parties, where there are more than one, at the time of the institution of the complaint, actually and voluntarily resides or carries on business or has a branch office or personally works for gain; or

(b) any of the opposite parties, where there are more than one, at the time of the institution of the complaint, actually and voluntarily resides, or carries on business or has a branch office or personally works for gain, provided that in such case either the permission of the State Commission is given or the opposite parties who do not reside or carry on business or have a branch office or personally work for gain, as the case may be, acquiesce in such institution; or

(c) the cause of action, wholly or in part, arises.

14A. Transfer of cases. - On the application of the complainant or of its own motion, the State Commission may, at any stage of the proceeding, transfer any complaint pending before the District Forum to another District Forum within the State if the interest of justice so requires.

14B. Circuit Benches.-The State Commission shall ordinarily function in the State Capital but may perform its functions at such other place as the State Government may, in consultation with the State Commission, notify in the Official Gazette, from time to time.