

Aspects of applying consumer rights protection law



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The Consumer Rights Protection Act-2009 is an important law for the consumers of our country. The number of consumers is the same as the total population of Bangladesh (16.43 crore). Not only that, those children who are still in mothers' womb are also considered as consumers. At present, the total number of pregnant women is thirty-five lakh and, thus, if this number is added to the total population, the new number of consumers stands at 16.58 crore. Those who sell only one product are also consumers because they not only sell a product but also buy one or more products. So, all the people of Bangladesh have an inseparable connection with consumer rights. Hence, it

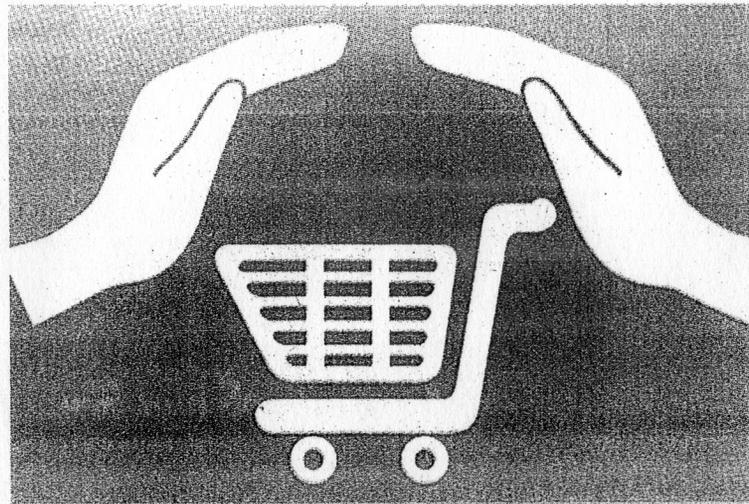
is very important for us to be aware of the consumer rights and applying the same.

The income of most Bangladeshis is limited. They have to go through a very calculative life. It is very unfortunate that they are frequently being cheated while buying quality products with their little income. Cheating is a serious problem in buying quality products from markets, which hamper normal course of life. On the other hand, if the supply of production decreases in the market, the price of these products increases. Moreover, many products have to be imported from different foreign countries, and due to some difficulties in processing those imported products in the immigration, the supply decreases in the market and the shortage of products increases. Besides these, due to greediness of some black marketers, hoarders, and profiteers, the price of products goes up to a frightening level that puts the consumer rights at risk.

Among the basic human rights, food is the most important and sensitive issue. But this right has been violated in many ways. Nowadays, the rate of food adulteration has become so acute that consumers are not able to keep their trust on hand-made or raw foods. Even, this tendency of food adul-

teration has spread all over the world especially in the developed countries. According to a research conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), one of the main reasons of cancer is adulterated foods. So, the right to safe and pure foods has become a burning issue in the world.

To eradicate the above mentioned problem, the Consumer Rights Protection Act-2009 was passed in the National Parliament on 6 April 2009. Among the objectives of passing this law, the most important were ensuring safe products, preventing fraudulence in buying products and consumer rights and responsibilities. In this



regard, the consumers should also have to play roles in taking care of their

rights. If consumers have a minimum knowledge about their rights protection law, they can protect themselves against this fraudulence or can take steps to hand punishment to the culprits through intervention of the proper authority.

If consumers are cheated in buying products, they should give written complaints to the director general or head of divisional office or district office. It is better to attach a copy of the receipt with the letter. The victim must mention his/her full name, parents' names, phone, fax, e-mail, and profession in this letter. If this complaint is acceptable, the consumers will get justice within two or three weeks.

Consumers can get justice in three ways: Administrative Justice,

Criminal Court Justice, and Civil Court Justice. Director General or authorized officer of the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection can punish any organization by imposing only penalty under administrative justice instead of filing criminal case. In criminal court justice, offences against the consumer rights can be administered by the first class judicial magistrate or the Metropolitan Magistrate. They can punish the offenders by jail sentence or can punish by penalty or both or can seize their properties as punishment. In civil court justice, the victim can be paid up to minimum five times penalty by the offender.

It is a matter of pleasure that Bangladeshi consumers are getting aware of the consumer rights protection law day by day. This law becomes understandable to the consumers and they can complain against the offenders and, so, the rate of complaint is increasing. However, to raise awareness among the consumers about the law, different meetings, discussions, seminars, symposiums and talk-shows are being arranged since

2015 with the participation of students, teachers, businessmen, buyers, sellers and intellectuals. Through these programmes, awareness is increasing among the consumers day by day.

The Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection is a comparatively new organization with only nine years of age. Under the direction of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the leadership of Ministry of Commerce, the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection is getting stronger. And so are the national consumer rights activities.

To strengthen the activities, different field level promotional steps are being taken to increase awareness among the consumers. But it is still a challenge for the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection to reach the law door-to-door. Along with Government, all the consumers should come forward to face the challenge. All consumers should be aware of their own rights. Because, consumer rights will be better protected if consumers become acquainted with the law.

