

# COMMON CAUSE

VOICE OF "COMMON CAUSE"

## ANGUISH OF LITIGANTS HAS INCREASED

Strikes by lawyers in various parts of the country have further added to the miseries and anguish of litigants. They have suffered long, for many years. Their cases in courts have languished, and large number of them come to court from far off places; in the courts they encounter extreme exasperations of seeing their cases adjourned.

In Delhi lawyers were agitating against the amendments made in the Civil Procedure Code by the recent CPC (Amendment) Act. The Bill for making the proposed amendments was introduced in the Parliament three years ago; the lawyers had every opportunity to convey their views on the proposed amendments; apex Bar Council is stated to have been asked for views; in any case, representatives of the people in the Parliament had full opportunities to voice views on their behalf; there was no opposition to the proposed amendments in either House. The Bill was accordingly passed last November; it received assent of the President in December and became an Act. It has yet to be notified by the Government for coming into force. At this stage lawyers have woken up and are agitating against it.

- ★ Everybody is eligible to take membership of COMMON CAUSE. No form is required. Merely send your name and complete address, preferably written in CAPITAL LETTERS. Send it to our new address: COMMON CAUSE, Common Cause House, 5, Institutional Area, Nelson Mandela Road, Vasant Kunj, NEW DELHI 110070. We are ever so grateful to Mr. Vikram Lal, of Eicher Tractors for having enabled construction of COMMON CAUSE HOUSE.
- ★ Membership fee for individuals is Rs.100 for one year; Rs.500 for life membership for individuals; Rs. 200 for annual membership of organisations and associations. Send by crossed cheque in favour of COMMON CAUSE.
- ★ We receive numerous letters. Replies are invariably sent. On the average our receipt is about 20/30 letters every day. Kindly, therefore, write only when you must; letters received in local language present us difficulties in deciphering.
- ★ Donations to COMMON CAUSE are eligible for exemption available under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act. Your donations, and those of your friends, will be most welcome indeed.

Provisions contained in the Act all aim at expediting the trial of cases in courts, for overcoming the cumbersome procedures which have been thwarting the proper administration of justice. In the next article in this periodical the position has been explained in regard to various provisions of this Act, including those relating to submission of affidavits with complaints, transmission of documents to parties through utilisation of processes of modern technology instead of old intermediacy of process servers, recording of evidence through Commissions appointed by the courts, exploring the possibilities of arbitration and conciliation, specification of definite period within which parties have to submit their rejoinders and fixing responsibility on the courts to pronounce judgement and issue decree within a specified period. Another welcome provision made in it is that of awarding adequate compensation to any person against whom a false case has been instituted. Previously the provision was of awarding the amount of only Rs. 1000/- that was in 1908 Act; this amount has now been increased to Rs. 50,000. It is

astounding that the lawyers who are officers of the courts and whose duty and responsibility is to uphold the dignity of courts and of the instruments of justice, put forth the spectacle of paralysing courts by the strike which, in the minds of the people in general, is looked upon as their anxiety to go on prolonging cases and seeking adjournments. There is an inescapable feeling among the people that lawyers take adjournments for their own benefit, for charging more fees, for which, as is well known, they do not give any receipts.

Another cause being put forth by the lawyers is of some amendment of Advocates Act. Enquiries have been made from the Law Ministry; there is at present no definite proposal for amending this Act, and this cause for agitation is obviously misplaced. In any case, the proposal, tentatively mooted in a circulated note for an amendment, to allow foreign law firms to operate in India, is looked upon by knowledgeable sources as those of trade related legal services, inter-country investments and flow of services, cross-bar intellectual property, project finance and infrastructure contracts; not in the areas of criminal, civil or constitutional laws. In the circumstances this ground for resorting to agitation is totally untenable. Lawyers are certainly capable of putting forth their viewpoints before the concerned authorities instead of resorting to strike.

- LAWYERS' STRIKE
- WRIT PETITION ON FAKE UNIVERSITIES
- CONSUMER MOVEMENT

- CORRUPTION IN INDIA
- POPULATION PROBLEM
- ENVIRONMENT



In connection with the general problem of lawyers' strike position has been explained in the next article about the important decision of the Supreme Court on the Writ Petition previously filed by COMMON CAUSE on the subject. This decision was taken after the matter had been examined in detail by a Committee constituted by the court, in which Bar Council of India, Bar Association of Delhi, Attorney General and an eminent advocate Mr. F.S. Nariman, participated and Director, COMMON CAUSE also had the privilege of being its member. Decision of the court comprised the following directions:

In rare instance where any Association of lawyers enters upon strike it must be left open to any individual member of the Bar to be free to appear without let, fear or hindrance or any other coercive step. Bar Council of India had opined that no strike should be resorted to excepting in rarest of rare cases. No member of the Bar who appears in court shall be penalised in any manner and shall not suffer any expulsion or threat of expulsion from the Bar Association. Lawyers can utilise other forms of protest such as wearing arm bands and other forms of protest which do not interrupt or disrupt court proceedings.

This judgement of the Supreme Court, delivered on 7.12.94, recorded that the matter would be reviewed after six months' experience of the operation of these directions, for determining whether strike by lawyers should be adjudged illegal. Thereafter, the then Attorney General, Mr. Ashok Desai, continued collecting information from various parts of the country about strikes declared by lawyers from time to time, on some ground or the other. This information continued to be compiled and presented to the court. COMMON CAUSE Director had occasion to attend six further hearings during 1996 and 1997 in which the court took note of these continuing strikes. After that no definite decision appears to have been taken on this issue excepting that directions of 7.12.94 continue to prevail.

In the context of this prevailing decision, debarring every Bar Association from preventing any lawyer from attending the courts, the Supreme Court on 13th March took cognizance of three applications submitted by lawyers who have been removed from membership of Bar Associations because of their attending courts in defiance of the present strike. Mr. Shanti Bhushan, the previous Law Minister, is one of them; the others are Ms. Kamini Jaiswal who has been removed from the Bar Association of Supreme Court, and Ms. Sujata Kohli who has been removed from the Bar Association of Tis Hazari Courts of Delhi. Mr. Ram Jethmalani, the present Law Minister also carries the distinction of having been removed from the Bar Association on account of his not agreeing to cancel the proposal of Notification of CPC (Amendment) Act. Special Bench of the Supreme Court heard the three applications; Hon'ble Judges adjudged it appropriate to issue a request to the Bar Council and Bar Associations to desist from adopting this course, and have fixed 27th March for the next hearing of the case. Director attended the proceedings because he had received notice in the context of previous decision of the court on the Writ Petition of the COMMON CAUSE. He wanted to place before the Court the wider perspective of anguish of the people and disarray of judicial functioning in the country, but could not get the opportunity to do so.

In connection with lawyers' strike in Delhi the surrender by governmental authorities to the demand of suspension of police officials responsible for injuring the lawyers during the demonstration on 24th February is being looked upon by the people as very unfortunate. It is being contended that lawyers defied the law during the demonstration, by jumping over the barricades and aggressively pushing forward towards the Parliament, as everybody saw on the TV. Suspension of police officials can inevitably lead to demoralisation of law enforcing authority; it will not help to solve the problem and may even worsen it. Lawyers themselves are stated to have wielded lathis and thrown stones; some police officials were injured.

While we consider these matters relating to lawyers' present strike it is necessary also to assess what can be done to reduce the backlog of cases which are bringing the entire judicial system into disrepute. Three crore cases pending in the courts (over one crore criminal cases and two crore civil cases) cannot be wished away. The problem has to be tackled. Existing strength of judiciary in the districts cannot deal with this huge backlog. There is crying need of establishing more courts. Rough estimate of annual expenditure of one court cannot be more than about Rs. 8 lakhs. If 100 additional courts are set up, the aggregate expenditure will be Rs. 8 crores. Judicial functioning at the district level is a state subject. It is difficult to expect that the State Governments on their own will incur this additional expenditure. Government of India surely needs to consider doing something positive about it. In the interest of improving the image of judicial functioning in the country it should not be difficult for Government of India to somehow find an amount of about Rs. 30 crores for enabling the setting up of 300 additional courts in districts, especially for clearing the accumulated backlog. Retired Magistrates and Sub-Judges who are not above 65 years of age can be appointed to these courts, to operate for three years. Infrastructure and subordinate court staff can be arranged. District Magistrates and District Judges should be charged with the specific responsibility of getting the backlog minimised within this period. This effort will be worth making. After all, Government of India is presently giving grants to State Governments for strengthening the operation of courts established under Consumer Protection Act. The requirement of clearing backlog of criminal and civil cases can also be considered in that light by the Central Government for providing requisite assistance to the States.

Let us hope that judicial functions and operations of courts will not continue to be further thwarted by lawyers and will also receive due consideration by the governmental authorities. Interests of the country demand this. People look to them for appropriate decisions.



## LAWYERS: HELP, DON'T HINDER LEGAL REFORM

*By HD SHOURIE*

Our judicial system is in a mess. Cases languish in courts for years. There are now two crore civil, and over one crore criminal cases pending, and courts all over the country are groaning under the weight of this backlog. One can imagine the enormous anguish and exasperation of the people involved.

The fault lies mostly with the laws and procedures which govern the functioning of courts. The main operative laws are more than a century old. The Indian Penal Code is of 1860 vintage. The Indian Evidence Act goes back to 1874. The Civil Procedures Code was introduced in 1908 and the Criminal Procedure Code is thirty years old. Over the years these laws have on a few occasions been amended, but the amendments have amounted to little more than tinkering with them.

For the first time an effort has now been made to effect some comprehensive and important amendments in the Civil Procedure Code. These aim at expediting the processes in courts. The Amendment Bill was passed by both houses of Parliament last year, and now has become an Act. It has now to be notified by the Government for becoming operative.

At this juncture the lawyers have suddenly woken up to its provisions. The Bar Council of India and Bar Associations are now conveying their displeasure and asking all lawyers everywhere to go on strike. This is obviously a very serious development threatening to bring the justice system to a grinding halt, enormously magnifying and multiplying the anguish which the people are already experiencing.

The public interest demands that the lawyers avoid going on strike. The general matter of strike by lawyers had in fact been taken to the Supreme Court from the platform of COMMON CAUSE five years ago. The Bar Council of India and Government of India were made parties to the case. The Supreme Court on the basis of recommendation of a committee constituted by it, had given the well known verdict that it should be only on rarest of rare occasions that lawyers should go on strike and that if ever a strike has to be observed by a Bar Association, no lawyer should be prevented from going into courts. There were some instances of lawyers having been thus prevented; the Supreme Court initiated contempt of court proceedings against the defaulting Bar Associations.

The lawyers have a collective responsibility to help ensure proper implementation of provisions of the decided amendments in order that wheels of justice may roll faster.

Let us look at the amendments in the Civil Procedure code which have been made by this Amendment Act. The basic objective of the amendments is to shorten the period of trial and reduce the burden on the parties to the suits.

- i) The plaint filed in relation to every suit has now to be accompanied by an affidavit to the effect that the plaintiff swears on oath that whatever is stated in the plaint is truth and nothing but the truth; he shall be liable to serious action if facts sworn in it are found false. This requirement itself will go a long way to eliminate chances of false and frivolous cases being filed or for settling personal scores.
- ii) Every Plaint must be accompanied by a duplicate so that the copy can be served without delay on the other party.
- iii) On receipt of plaint and its copy, the summons must be issued within 30 days; previously no limit had been prescribed excepting that the summons had to be served through court messenger. Provision has now been made that summons can be transmitted through registered post, or by speed post, or courier service, or even through fax and electronic mail service. This type of amendment shows how the courts can now keep up with latest developments in technology.
- iv) A limit of 30 days has been prescribed for submission of reply by defendant. This too is aimed at expediting the processing of case in court.



- v) If any document has been submitted in the case, a duplicate must also be submitted, the duplicate will be sent to other party for reply within seven days denying or accepting it.
- vi) If any witnesses have to be led by either party after framing of issues in the case, the list of witnesses along with their addresses must be submitted to court within five days.
- vii) In every case, evidence must be given by affidavit, supplying a copy to the other party; the time of the court is saved by providing that cross examination can be conducted before a commissioner appointed by a court out of a panel approved by the district judge.

Adjournments are the bane of the existing system of functioning of courts. It has now been provided that no party shall be allowed to have more than three adjournments. And, for any adjournment sought by a party, costs shall be imposed as deemed proper by the court; previously there was vagueness about costs. Under the new dispensation, the judgement must be given within 15 days of the conclusion of a case and decree must be issued within further 15 days. A very healthy and welcome new provision has been made that where the court considers that the case has scope of settlement it has been empowered to refer the case for arbitration, mediation, conciliation, judicial settlement or Lok Adalat decision in accordance with the prescribed procedures. If such reference fails to arrive at a settlement, the case must be immediately referred back and proceedings should begin in court within one week thereafter.

Appeal against a decision is another matter which now causes all sorts of delays and manipulations by parties. It has now been provided that where the case is decided by small causes court and decree is not more than of Rs. 3,000 no appeal shall lie against the decision. Where the case has been decided by a judge of high court on an appeal or appellate decree, no appeal shall lie. It has also been provided that where appeal is against a decision of high court on an application under provisions of article 226 and 227 of the Constitution dealing with the issue of writ or order in relation to fundamental rights and matters relating to superintendence over courts and tribunals there shall be no appeal.

It is very obvious that the amendments made in the Civil Procedure Code will definitely benefit everyone. They aim at improving judicial r ocedures. One hopes these will help reduce the huge backlog of pendency.

Provision has been made that in cases where action has already been taken under the relevant clauses of the main Act in pending suits, these amendments will not be applicable. There is no real justification for lawyers to agitate and to go on strike. These amendments will no doubt disable them from seeking adjournments and prolonging cases, but after all lawyers exist for the people and for their clients; it is not that the clients exist for them. One only hopes that this process of reform of the judicial system will be carried further by the Government and Parliament and that similar reforms will be effected in the Indian Panel Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Evidence Act.

---

"This guy came by trying to sell me a talking dog for Rs. 50", related the bartender. "I said, "Get out of here!" But then the dog said, "Please, sir, this man is mean to me, he never takes me for walks, hardly feeds me, locks me up for days..." I said, "Hey he really can talk. Why are you selling him for only Rs. 50!"

The guy said, "I'm sick and tired of all his lies!"

...

Hotel proprietor to guest: "You will feel perfectly at home here!"

"Oh, dear," replies the guest, "I came to have a good rest!"

...

A father took his children to the zoo. All were looking forward to seeing the monkeys. Unfortunately, it was mating time and, the attendant explained, the monkeys had gone inside their little sanctuary for some togetherness. "Would they come out for some peanuts?" asked the father.

"Would you?" responded the attendant.



## CORRUPTION IN INDIA

N. Vittal, Central Vigilance Commissioner

India's economy today is a standing monument to the corruption and inefficiency of four specific departments namely, Customs, Central Excise, Income Tax and the Enforcement Directorate. It is the evasion of the taxes and the failure of these departments to check illegal activities that has crystallised into the large percentage of black money in the economy. The quantum of black money has been estimated from Rs. 40,000 crores to Rs. 100,000 crores. Whole industries today depend on the black economy. The film industry, a substantial part of the construction industry and a large number of small industries are run on the basis of black money. I wonder, if by some magic and by applying the principle of zero tolerance, we are able to eliminate the menace of corruption what will happen to all the people who were employed in these black money financed sector of the economy? I am not defending black money but I am only highlighting the vested interests who will bring pressure and try to nullify the implementation of the zero tolerance principle of the Prime Minister.

Our elections also involve a lot of black money and it is this use of black money in elections which has also brought about the criminalisation of politics highlighted by the Vohra Committee. After all, the story of the Hawala scam started by the police stumbling to the Jain diaries in their effort to trace the money received by the Kashmir militants. The scam brought out the linkage between the corrupt businessmen, politicians, bureaucracy and the criminals. The 1993 Bombay blasts which took away the life of 300 people was made possible because RDX could be smuggled by allegedly bribing a customs official with Rs. 20 lakhs. The Prime Minister therefore is very right in applying the principle of zero tolerance both to corruption and to terrorism. We see that there is a close link between the two.

For achieving this, what we need is not any compromising sympathetic or softly attitude to corruption. As the Prime Minister has indicated what we need to do is to apply the principle of zero tolerance. How do we translate this principle of zero tolerance into action?

Zero tolerance means that no case of corruption will be tolerated and the corrupt would be punished. In our system the bribe giver and the bribe taker are both guilty. The only exceptions are the members of parliament. According to the judgement of the Supreme Court in the JMM case, the bribe receiving MP who has to do some activity within the Parliament is not guilty but the bribe giver, even if he is a Member of Parliament, is guilty.

The efforts made in the past to check corruption have failed precisely because the guilty under the existing system of judicial process do not generally get punished. The conviction rate in the Indian courts is only 6%. There are three crore cases pending in the Indian courts? The average time taken for disposal of cases ranges from 10-20 years is another important aspect. So far as anti-corruption cases handled by the CBI are concerned, as of August 1999, 1173 cases are pending investigation, 501 cases of which are less than one year, 644 cases are between 1-5 years and 28 cases are more than five years. When it comes to prosecution, the figures are more pathetic. As of August 1999, 3484 cases are pending.

As we look at the corruption scene today, we find that we have reached this stage because the corrupting of the institutions in turn has finally led to the institutionalisation of corruption. As the Prime Minister pointed out, the failure to deal with corruption has bred contempt for the law. When there is contempt for the law and this is combined with the criminalisation of politics, corruption flourishes. It is the honest public servant who tries to implement the law who becomes a misfit under such a situation.

There are five key players in our Indian corruption scene. These are the corrupt politician (neta), the corrupt bureaucrat (babu), the corrupt businessman (lala), the corrupt NGO (jhola) and finally the criminal (dada). There are five reasons why our system encourages corruption. These are (i) scarcity of goods and services, (ii) lack of transparency, (iii) red tape and delay due to obsolete rules and procedures which are



time consuming and encourage speed money, (iv) cushions of legal safety which have been laid down by various pronouncements of the courts and CATs on the principle that everybody is innocent till proved guilty. The net result is that the corrupt are able to engage the best lawyers and quibble their way through the system. Shakespeare pointed out in his MEASURE FOR MEASURE that laws are like scarecrows. They are initially installed to scare the birds. Once the birds realise that the scarecrow is a harmless doll, they build their nests on it. (v) Finally, biradri or tribalism, where the corrupt public servants protect each other. We talk about people being thick as thieves not thick as honest men!

These five reasons are a mutually reinforcing vicious cycle of corruption. This can be tackled only by setting in motion a virtuous cycle of anti corruption which will help achieve the goal of zero tolerance. Three elements are needed for this virtuous cycle. The first is the simplification of rules and procedures so that the scope for corruption is reduced to the minimum. One can deal with corruption like one deals with Malaria. One can either give medicine to those who have been affected by the disease or prevent the breeding of mosquitoes. Simplification of rules and removing the red tape that causes delay is like removing the stagnant pools which encourages the mosquitoes of corruption.

The second element of virtuous cycle should be transparency and empowering of the public. Here the need for a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is very obvious. There is an urgent need for applying information technology in every citizen public office interface so that the common citizen can have access to information that he needs.

The third element is effective punishment. This is where we have to go beyond depending only on the judicial system and see what other weapons can be thought off so that the effective punishment of the corrupt is ensured. Today corruption is a low risk high profit business. The principle of zero tolerance resulting in effective and prompt punishment should increase the risk. This should be the most important single element in the virtuous cycle to eliminate corruption.

.....

---

"I once missed the opportunity of a lifetime because a black cat crossed my path as I set out. To avoid bad luck, I back-tracked, took a longer route and reached the job interview a good half hour late. Needless to say, I did not get the job.

I really had nothing against black cats. It's just that each time they crossed my path, they seemed to presage punctured tyres, muffed meetings or quarrels with friends. I wasn't superstitious, mind you. It's just that along with black cats, I preferred to avoid the number 13, walking beneath ladders and sneezing before a departure. I also kept a birthstone in my pocket and touched wood for good measure.

Of course, in this world of science and logic, irrational concepts like mine were sadly outmoded. And I promised to overcome them. Gradually, time, the eternal healer, lent a hand. Meetings held on the 13th went off like clockwork; a sneeze before departure signalled no disaster greater than an impending cold; and even black cats heralded no calamity.

My superstitions are now a thing of the past. I am truly cured - touch wood!"

...

Two couples, who've played cards every month for years, are taking a break from their game. After their wives go into the kitchen, Joe says to Frank, "I usually have to remind you what cards have been played, but tonight I didn't have to. How come?"

"I went to memory school," says Frank.

"Really?" asks Joe. "What's the name of the school?"

"Let me see ... what do you call that flower that's red, with thorns on the stem".

"A rose," says Joe.

"Yeah, that's it, a rose. Hey, Rose!" yells Frank towards the kitchen. "What was the name of that memory school I went to?"

...

A man can stand a lot as long as he can stand himself.



## LAW MAKERS TURN LAW BREAKERS RUPEES 300 CRORE EXTORTED EVERY MONTH

Investigations have revealed that close to a whopping Rs. 300 crore per month is collected by law enforcers, the local police and civic officials, through extortion in the form of protection money. This practice appears to be rampant in every nook and cranny of the city, allegedly with the active connivance of local goons (dadas) in almost every market place in the Capital. These estimates have been arrived by a team of 'citizen wardens' appointed by the Lt. Governor.

This amount does not include the protection money allegedly collected by the organised Delhi Vidyut Board (DVB) mafia which pockets the money generated from electricity theft both in jhuggis and small-scale industries run on residential premises and industrial areas. DVB incurs a 50 per cent loss in revenue due to electricity theft, pilferage and illegal connections.

A typical example of how the hafta system operates is the case of Masjid Ali. This enterprising trader, fed up with the hafta system operated by the underworld in Mumbai, travelled all the way to the Capital to open a paan shop here and found the situation no different. He occupied a four-by-four corner, near a subway in a posh NDMC area. Within a week of his setting up shop, Ali was told to pay Rs. 50,000 - allegedly by the police and civic officials for occupying government land. For over a year, he has been paying a monthly hafta of Rs. 1,500 - shared equally by the police and NDMC officials.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg. Extortion runs rampant among officials of all law-enforcement departments, including the MCD, NDMC, DDA, DVB and even the Delhi Police, who openly run a parallel tax collection racket of their own. From Subzi Mandi to Paharganj, from Lajpat Nagar to Gandhi Nagar, extortion is an organised racket. Unlike Mumbai, where local dons control extortion, law-enforcing officials themselves are allegedly part of the network in Delhi.

Senior Delhi police officials confirmed and admitted that extortion has been institutionalised. 'Who will bell the cat? The network is deep-rooted and has become an integral part of the system. We are just safety pins fighting against razors in a climate of extortion,' says a senior police official.

A large amount of the money collected could well go to the government kitty instead of being siphoned by select officials of these departments. Instead of paying the amount for an illegal permit, for instance, the same amount could be paid to legitimise it", says a South Delhi based citizen warden. "Unfortunately, corruption is ingrained in the system. It is a shame that even politicians and senior bureaucrats refuse to address the issue," he says.

Middle level police officials shrug off any discussion on the matter even though Station House Officers (SHOs) posted at the 106 police stations in the city have significant clout in the city. "The scam is so well-knit that everyone knows how much money is paid to whom. The highest income is generated from Chandni Chowk, Paharganj, Karol Bagh, Naraina, Mayapuri and Gandhi Nagar areas", says an official in the anti-corruption bureau.

However, senior Delhi police officials insist that the root cause for poor monitoring of offenders within the force is the fact that the police vigilance department is understaffed, staffed by a mere seven inspectors. Moreover, the anti-corruption cell of the Delhi government is manned by Delhi police officials themselves. "They are ready to trap a junior engineer in MCD but always hesitate before acting against an SHO. Besides, officials in the anti-corruption cell can be transferred to their home department any time. They catch people only for record's sake", states a senior MCD officer.

Shopkeepers and others who find themselves caught in this regular extortion network by the law-enforcing authorities say that they are wary of complaining since they fear they might just end up paying double the amount after a complaint. For instance, approximately 150 second hand booksellers who peddle



their wares on the pavements at the Daryaganj market on Sundays, pay Rs. 100 each to a contact man. The Central district police headquarters is located bang opposite the Sunday book market.

"We are ready to pay the same amount to the government for occupying the pavement. The police and MCD take a cut regularly from us," claim a bookseller. At India Gate, despite a ban on hawkers by the Delhi High Court, a neat Rs. 25,000 a day is extorted from mobile ice cream vendors and softdrink sellers alone.

Here, a Pepsi sells for Rs. 15 and an ordinary Rs. 4 ice-cream is sold for Rs. 12. When contacted, a middle-man admitted that the prices are hiked up only in order that the 'commission' can be paid at the end of the day.

At Chandni Chowk, converting old structures into new buildings has several hidden expenses. "I paid Rs. one lakh just to construct a couple of rooms on the top floor of my house. The cost didn't include any of the construction work. It was money shared by the police, MCD and the middle-man contractor, says a leading businessman, who admits that this cost saved him a great deal of harassment by the same authorities if he had opted for the legal route.

A local builder told the Delhi Times that extortion money paid for this kind of construction can even go upto Rs. 25 lakh. "The arithmetic is simple: Twenty per cent goes to the police, 20 per cent to the MCD and 20 per cent to local politicians. I keep the remaining 40 per cent to myself", says the builder. There are 50 small builders operating inside the walled city of Chandni Chowk, situated at a walking distance from the MCD headquarters.

*(From Lok Sevak Sangh)*

---

"Can I help you?" asked an official in the bank, of a woman who had just come in. The customer said she wanted to get to her safe deposit box. Checking the files, the official was unable to locate the correct signature card, and asked the woman if she was sure of the box number. They looked at the inscription on the key and confirmed it was correct, but there was no card. "Are you sure you rented the box in this office?" The official asked.

"No", replied the woman. "I rented it at another office, but they told me I could do all my banking at any of the branches.

...

Do you know what goes on in a field of growing corn? From a small seed it grows in eight weeks to a plant with over 1,400 square inches of leaf surface; one of the most remarkable feats of growth in the plant kingdom. And in eight weeks the plant establishes a root system which, if laid end to end, would extend a distance of seven miles. There's saying that in ideal weather you can hear the corn grow. That isn't quite true, but the plant often does grow as much as four inches in a day.

...

One woman at an art gallery stood before a painting of a ragged vagabond. "Imagine that!" She exclaimed. "Too broke to buy a decent suit, but he can afford to get portrait painted."

...

I am an idealist. I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way.

...

A couple walking in the park noticed a young man and woman sitting on a bench, passionately kissing.

"Why don't you do that?" said the wife.

"Honey," replied her husband, "I don't even know the woman!"

...

There's always room for improvement. It's the biggest room in the house.

...

If you would be pungent, be brief; for it is with words as with sunbeams. The more they are condensed, the deeper they burn.

...

Whoever wants to be a judge of human nature should study people's excuses.

...



## FAKE UNIVERSITIES AND BOGUS TEACHING INSTITUTIONS

We have filed a Writ Petition in the Supreme Court highlighting the tendency which has been in evidence during the last few years of the multiplication and proliferation of universities, institutions and organisations in the country which advertise their claims of eligibility and capability of giving educational courses and training programmes in all sorts of subjects. Through the advertisements they have been luring and duping young students; number of them not having the capability and accreditation claimed by them in advertisements, charging high fees, often involving expenditure of lakhs of rupees.

It has been found that as many as 18 universities, which have put across their advertisements in newspaper, have turned out to be fake universities; there are indications that 10 other advertised universities are also reported to be fake.

Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India, University Grants Commission, All India Council for Technical Education and Medical Council of India have been made Respondents.

There are quite a few annexures mentioned in the Writ Petition. These are not being attached in this reproduction.

---

### IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA EXTRAORDINARY CIVIL JURISDICTION CIVIL WRIT PETITION

In the matter of:

COMMON CAUSE (A Registered Society)  
through its Director  
Shri H.D. Shourie  
A-31 West End,  
New Delhi-110021.

... Petitioner.

Versus

1. Union of India,  
Ministry of Human Resource Development,  
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001  
Through its Secretary.
2. University Grants Commission,  
Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,  
New Delhi-110002.  
Through its Secretary.
3. Medical Council of India,  
Aiwan Ghalib Marg,  
Kotla Road, New Delhi-110002  
Through its Secretary.
4. All India Council for Technical Education,  
Indira Gandhi Stadium  
I.P. Estate,  
New Delhi-110002  
Through its Secretary

... Respondents.



PETITION UNDER ARTICLE 32 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA FOR ISSUANCE OF A WRIT IN THE NATURE OF MANDAMUS OR ANY OTHER APPROPRIATE WRIT, ORDER OR DIRECTION, DIRECTING THE RESPONDENTS TO INITIATE URGENT CONCRETE ACTION, AND TO ALSO LAY DOWN DEFINITE POLICY, TO ENSURE THAT FAKE UNIVERSITIES AND INADEQUATELY EQUIPPED AND INCOMPETENT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, IN THE NATURE OF "TEACHING SHOPS", ARE NOT ALLOWED TO OPERATE IN THE COUNTRY AS HAS HITHERTO BEEN IN EVIDENCE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, WHICH HAVE BEEN ADDRESSING HOODWINKING GULLIBLE STUDENTS, DESIROUS OF DEVELOPING THEIR CAREERS, AND WHICH HAVE BEEN CHARGING VERY HIGH FEES FOR ADMISSION TO THESE UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS, AND HAVE BEEN OPERATING TO THE EXTREME DETRIMENT OF THE INTERESTS OF YOUNG STUDENTS, OFTEN LEADING TO THE CAUSATION OF RUIN OF THEIR CAREERS DEVELOPMENT AND THEIR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, THESE ACTION BEING VIOLATIVE OF PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA.

To

Hon'ble The Chief Justice of India and His Lordship's  
Companion Justices of the Supreme Court of India.

The Humble Petition of the Petitioner above named, MOST RESPECTFULLY SHEWTEH:

1. That the Petitioner is a Society duly registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and is engaged in taking up various common problems of the people for securing redressal thereof. The Petitioner Society has also brought to Court various constitutional problems. The Petitioner has an established locus standi in its capacity as a bonafide public interest organisation for taking up matters of general public importance. The Petitioner is submitting the present public interest Petition for consideration of the Hon'ble Court.
2. That Respondent No. 1 is the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India, responsible for implementation of legislations relating to all aspects of Human Development including Education. Respondent No. 2 University Grants Commission is the authority created under a statute for dealing with all administrative matters relating to the universities in the country. Respondent No. 3 is the Medical Council of India, body created under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for dealing with all problems relating to medical institutions including hospitals as well as teaching institutions. Respondent No. 4, All India Council for Technical Education is the authority established under the Ministry of Human Resource Development for dealing with all problems relating to the institutions concerned with Technical Education.
3. That there are reports of very serious manipulations and stratagems being resorted to by various unscrupulous elements which are creating conditions jeopardising appropriate career development of young students who look forward to acquire education and degrees for exploring avenues of their employment. Numerous advertisements frequently appear in the newspapers and magazines offering admissions to students in various universities and institutions, in India and abroad, in different areas of study including engineering, medical, computers etc. The aspiring young persons are lured by these attractive advertisements and arrange funds for defraying the cost of admission, travel, board and lodging. A number of these universities and teaching institutions have apparently developed during the last few years.
4. That this matter has been taken up by the Petitioner with Respondent No. 1 and also with Respondents No. 2,3 & 4. Various reports, which have appeared in the newspapers on the subject, have been brought to their notice. Some of these newspapers reports are submitted at Annexure 'A'. It will be evident from these Press reports that these developments are considered as a matter of serious concern. It was inter-alia mentioned in a newspaper report (HT dated 22.8.98) that thousands of aspiring medical students are being duped by several agencies which are promising them admissions in medical colleges in various countries; they are charging as much as Rs. 2.00 lakhs for securing admission; the cost of other expenses including



Air fare, accommodation charges, and other expenses is stated to be another Rs. 4.00 lakhs annually. It is stated in this newspaper's Report that many of the medical colleges thus advertised are likely to be derecognised by the year 2001 A.D. by Respondent No. 3, the Medical Council of India. The Petitioner had brought this matter to the notice of Respondent No. 1 through the letter dated 29.8.1998 (Copy at Annexure 'B') with copy to Medical Council of India. Likewise, the Petitioner also brought to the notice of Respondent No. 1 and Respondent No. 4. All India Council for Technical Education vide letter dated 3.10.1998 (Annexure 'C'), the reports of a number of engineering colleges of doubtful competence being set up and operating, charging heavy fee. Respondent No. 3, Medical Council of India in its letter dated 24.10.98 (Annexure 'D'), expressed its inability to deal with the matter of aspiring students being attracted abroad for medical studies because it did not have any authority or power to take action against any agency or Agents who are reported to be duping the aspiring students. University Grants Commission sent to the Petitioner (vide their letter dated 15.8.1998 - Annexure 'E') a list of 18 universities found to be fake. The Petitioner wrote to the University Grants Commission (vide letter dated 8.10.1998 - Annexure 'F') enquiring whether UGC has the requisite powers to deal with fake universities and other institutions.

5. That eventually Respondent No. 1 set up a Task Force for examining and submitting Report on the setting up of private universities and mushrooming of fake colleges and universities. The Task Force was constituted by order dated 7.7.1998 (Annexure 'G'). It appears to have submitted its Report in September, 1998. The Report of the Task Force is quite comprehensive. Its copy is placed at Annexure 'H'. Following important points emerged from this Report:

- (i) Several instances of universities and institutions, not established under law, and distributing degrees to students, have been known to the Government of India for about ten years.
- (ii) The Committee on Petitions of Lok Sabha took the cognizance of these reports and made the following specific recommendations:
  - (a) "The machinery for watching implementation of the provisions of the UGC Act may be streamlined and made more effective and purposeful. If need be, the provisions of the UGC Act may be suitably amended so that there is a self-working system aimed at checking the activities of institutions/organisations which tend to exploit the gullible youth by resorting to illegal methods.
  - (b) The penalty envisaged in Section 24 appears to be too mild. In order that it may have a deterrent effect, it may be suitably enhanced and even imprisonment may be provided for amending the relevant section of the Act."

University Grants Commission Act mentioned above in sub-para (b) is only to the effect that fine of Rs. 1000/- will be levied for the offence besides provision of penalty of sentence to imprisonment for three months. The Task Force has said that this punishment has over the years become a "joke".

- (iii) A Bill for amending the University Grants Commission Act was introduced in Rajya Sabha in December, 1991 providing for severe punishment under Section 24 of UGC Act raising the fine to Rs. 1.00 lakh and sentence of imprisonment to six months. This Bill was withdrawn in 1995 and fresh Bill was introduced in June, 1995, in Rajya Sabha. This new Bill has provided for punishment upto three years and fine of Rs. 1.00 lakh. Once again for various other reasons, the Bill was withdrawn.
- (iv) The Task Force pointed out that there have been reports of 18 universities having been found to be fake and that the Association for Indian Universities has named ten other universities to be fake. This problem, according to Task Force, needs to be attended to by the Government.
- (v) Accordingly, the Task Force has suggested that an Ordinance should be proclaimed "within the next few weeks", obviously because of the importance and urgency of the matter. The Task Force has stated that issuance of Ordinance will have two advantages; one that the matter would be taken care of without any further loss of time because more than four decades have already gone by, and second if the issue is linked up with the passage of new UGC Amendment Act, the enactment may take anything from few months to a few years. It has been urged by the Task Force, therefore, that a decision on this matter cannot be delayed any further; issuance of an Ordinance would ensure this.



- (vi) The Task Force has also suggested certain modifications in Section 20(3) and Section 23 of the UGC Act and has specifically suggested that Section 24 of the Act should be amended as follows:

"Whoever contravenes the provisions of Section 22 or Section 23 shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one year but which may extend to three years and shall simultaneously be liable to fine which shall not be less than one lakh rupees but which may extend to ten lakh rupees.

"If the person contravening is an association or a body of individuals, every member of such association or body who knowingly or wilfully authorize or permit such a contravention shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than one lakh rupees but which may extend to ten lakh rupees."

The suggestion of Task Force, in substance, is that the offences should be cognizable and non-bailable. In regard to the registration of the colleges by any university, the Task Force has made certain concrete suggestions. These appear in paragraph 4.3 of its Report. Various other recommendations have been made by the Task Force in relation to establishment and recognition of any university, conduct of examinations, awarding of degrees by the universities, and other connected matters.

6. That the Petitioner has since written to the Respondent No. 1 (Annexure I) dated 14.8.99 enquiring as to what action has been taken on the recommendations of the Task Force. The Petitioner had previously also made this enquiry vide letter dated 23.11.98 (Annexure J). No reply has yet come forth from the Respondent No. 1. The subject is of obvious importance and urgency, and it is a matter of serious concern that no communication is yet available from the Respondent No. 1 whether or what action has been taken on the recommendations of the Task Force.

7. That meanwhile the Petitioner has noticed that newspapers are continuously carrying all sorts of advertisements relating to various training programmes which are being offered by certain institutions and organisations. The Petitioner has, as an instance, communicated to the Respondents No. 1, 2, 3 & 4 (Annexure 'K') dated 26.10.99 copies of 28 advertisements which were culled from three newspapers of Delhi on three recent dates. Particulars of these advertisements are mentioned in this Annexure. It has not been considered necessary to burden this Petition with photocopies of these 28 advertisements. The fact of appearance of these various advertisements, making claims of their accreditation and competence, furnishes indication of the gravity of the matter which necessitates immediate action by Respondent No. 1 in consultation with Respondents No. 2, 3 & 4.

8. That in view of the above, the present Petition is being preferred on the following

#### GROUND

- (a) Because during the past many years there has been proliferation of various institutions and organisations claiming status of universities accredited institutions and competent organisations making all sorts of alluring offers to the young students for development of their careers by giving them training and courses in various disciplines and awarding them degrees, charging high fees for these.
- (b) Because enquiry made by the University Grants Commission Respondent No. 2 has shown that 18 such institutions claiming the status of universities were found to be fake universities and it has been reported that ten more such institutions are believed to be fake universities.
- (c) Because a number of other organisations and institutions, claiming to be competent to give training programmes in specified subjects, including medical, which have been and are advertising their programmes to attract students for development of their careers, may possibly include fake institutions and organisations which are charging high fees and luring young students through such advertisements.
- (d) Because the Petitioner has not been able to get any satisfactory response from any of the Respondents to the communications sent to them on the subject. The Petitioner was eventually informed that a



Task Force had been set up by Respondent No. 1 to go into this entire matter and to come forth with definite recommendations. The Task Force was constituted by the Order dated 7.7.98; it has since submitted its Report embodying specific recommendations. Among its recommendations the Task Force has suggested immediate action by Respondent No. 1 through issue of an Ordinance, inter-alia making necessary amendments in the existing UGC Act wherein punishment to offender in this context is limited only to fine of Rs. 1000/- and sentence of three months imprisonment. This punishment is found to be too inadequate to create any deterrent effect. Suggestion has been made to increase sentence of imprisonment to three years and infliction of fine to Rs. 1.00 lakh. Envisaging that it will take a long time to get the amendment made in the Act through the Parliament, the Task Force has suggested the issue of an Ordinance which would be followed by getting the requisite amendment effected through the Parliament. No information is yet available as to what action is contemplated by Respondent No. 1 on these important recommendations of the Task Force. The matter has been before the Respondent No. 1 for quite a few months.

9. That the above grounds are being taken without prejudice to one another and the Petitioner craves leave to add to or to amend the above.
10. That the present Petition is being submitted bonafide and in general public interest.
11. That no other Writ Petition or Proceeding has been initiated by the Petitioner in any High Court or the Supreme Court of India on the subject matter of the present Petition.
12. That the Petitioner has no alternative equally efficacious remedy in law for the cause of action being agitated herein.

#### PRAYERS

In the above premises, it is prayed that this Hon'ble Court may be pleased:

- (i) to issue a writ, direction or order or in the nature of mandamus and/or any other appropriate writ, direction or order directing Respondent No. 1 in consultation with Respondents No. 2,3 & 4 where necessary.
  - (a) to indicate to the Hon'ble Court as to what concrete steps are proposed to be taken on the recommendations of the Task Force constituted by the Order dated 7.7.98 (Annexure 'G') and when will these steps be taken;
  - (b) to communicate as to how the present menace of mushrooming and proliferating incompetent and non-accredited "teaching shops", making various offers of courses and training programmes to young persons, can be effectively checked;
  - (c) to consider ways and means, and to report to the Hon'ble Court, as to what steps can be taken to launch immediate enquiry into the capability, eligibility and competence of the institute or organisation or university claiming to offer specific training programmes or courses for career development of young persons, and to initiate appropriate action against those institutions, organisations and universities which are found to be fake or incompetent to offer such courses and training programmes;
  - (d) to pass such other and further orders as may be deemed necessary on the facts and in the circumstances of the case.

FOR WHICH ACT OF KINDNESS, THE PETITIONER SHALL AS IN DUTY BOUND, EVER PRAY.

New Delhi.  
Dated:

Petitioner  
Through  
H.D. Shourie, Director, Common Cause.



## POPULATION PROBLEM MUST BE SOLVED

In 1995, on the occasion of the Water Resources Day, the Indian Water Resources Society (IWRS) published a theme paper on "Water Management - Need for Public Awareness". According to the report, which provides an estimate for our water requirement in the future, a total of 1050 cubic kilometre (cu km) water will be required per year in 2025 AD - 52 cu km for domestic needs, 770 cu km for agriculture and 228 cu km for industrial and other needs. This "1995 estimate" ought to have been a matter of serious concern for the nation.

The total amount of utilisable fresh water resources available per year in India is about 1150 cu km. Of this, about 450 cu km is available as ground water and 700 cu km as surface water. This means that by the year 2025 AD, our total water demand will be about 90 per cent of the total amount of utilisable water available. This is alarming for two reasons.

First, our total water resource of 1150 cu km per year is not uniformly distributed throughout the country. Twenty-nine per cent of it is available in the Brahmaputra basin which constitutes only 6 per cent of the country's area and where only 3 per cent of our population lives. As against this the availability of water is much less than the national average in certain southern and western regions/states. In many southern regions, for instance, the water availability is as low as one fourth of the national average.

### Unusable

Second, most of our rivers and lakes are badly polluted. Even the Ganga's water is no more usable at most of the places on the river's stream. Out of the 80 districts that make up the Yamuna basin, 62 districts now experience high and medium water stress due to the problem of pollution. In 1997, about 3,000 crore litre of sewage water was generated per day in the country, but only 200 crore litre was treated before being discharged. Industries also pollute.

Somehow there is a wrong impression that nature has provided us with an abundance of water. This is based on the perception that we get about four per cent of the world's annual renewable fresh water supply whereas India has only about 2.5 per cent of world's total land area. This is an erroneous way to look at the situation. Since about 75 per cent of total water requirement is for agriculture, the right parameter to judge the status of water availability would be the percentage of arable land area and not of the total land area. Our arable land area is about 12.5 per cent of the world's arable land area and hence with only four percent of water India is in fact "water deficient".

There is yet another reason to feel concerned about the water situation. India has to manage 16 per cent of the world's human population and about 15 per cent of world's animal population. So water is a very critical constraint on India's development.

Eighty per cent of water is used for domestic and agricultural purposes. As our population grows water requirement for agriculture and industry will also grow. A major part of the country will be plagued by serious water famine much before 2025 AD even if we have normal monsoons every year.

Thankfully in 1996, the Government of India set up, for the first time, a National Commission for Integrated Water Resources Development to examine the issue of availability, demand, usage, optimisation and sustainability of water resources in India. The commission has recently (September 1999) submitted its report ("1999 report") to the government. This 1999 report too provides an estimate of our water requirement for 2025 AD, but surprisingly it differs significantly from the 1995 estimate. According to the 1999 report our water requirement in 2025 AD would be between 784 to 850 cu km only.



### Water Famine

It is difficult to understand how the estimate has come down so drastically. Either the 1995 estimate was grossly wrong, or the demand estimate has been revised downward to play down the gravity of the situation in which the nation has been placed because of the government's negligence. It was only in 1996, ie soon after the publication of the 1995 report that the government set up the national commission on water resources, which in fact ought to have been done much earlier.

If the 1999 estimate is right "there is no need to take an alarmist view". However, it may be pointed out here that Dr. MA Chitale an eminent authority on water resources too has warned that "The total requirement of water for various irrigation and non-irrigation sectors together is expected to be nearly equal to the utilisable quantity of water available in India by the year 2025"; and this is quite in agreement with the 1995 report as explained above.

It is therefore evident that the significant difference between the 1995 and 1999 estimates is a serious matter and must not be overlooked. But it is sad that this important matter has not got due attention. Our media is by and large so badly addicted to political trivia and gossip that it has lost much of its earlier zeal and urge to look into the serious issues really affecting the people and the nation. The only way to solve this problem and to know the correct estimate of our future water requirement is to have an open debate on the issue. The media has to inspire a debate on our future water requirement in which all organisations concerned and experts should be involved. This would be a great service to the nation and to our future generation.

### Birth Control

Since the main factor responsible for the continuous increase in the country's water requirement is its unnecessarily growing population, the most obvious, easiest and cheapest way to solve the everworsening water problem would be to put a brake on our rapid population growth which alone can provide a permanent solution to the problem. But, as is obvious from the executive summary of the 1999 report, the issue of population control does not form even a small chapter of the report which runs into more than five hundred pages; thus also giving a false impression that the water problem can be solved despite our rising population. And this will make our people and authorities all the more complacent about population control.

It is sad that the 1999 report has come at a time when the government is in the process of formulating - for the first time - a National Population Policy. The projection of a "non-alarming" water situation by the 1999 report will surely dampen the sense of urgency to control population.

*(K.B. Sahay in STATESMAN)*

---

A couple came upon a wishing well. The husband leaned over, made a wish and threw in a penny. The wife decided to make a wish, too. But she leaned over too much, fell into the well, and drowned. The husband was stunned for a while, but then smiled and said, "It really works!"

...

A computer is almost human -except that it doesn't blame its mistakes on another computer.

...

The cost of sending Parliament members abroad wouldn't be so bad, if they didn't keep coming back.

...

The only thing worse than being a bachelor is being a bachelor's son.

...

What is the penalty for bigamy?

Two mothers-in-law.



## ON CONSUMER MOVEMENT

In June 1998, the working of the West Bengal State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission came to a grinding halt. The reason? The president of the commission had retired and no fresh appointment was made by the state government to fill up the vacancy.

As complaints piled up and consumers were put to untold hardship, a consumer group in January 1999 sought the Calcutta High Court's directive to the state government to appoint a president and a member.

However, only the president was appointed and so following the resignation of the lone member in June 1999, the court stopped functioning once again as the president cannot adjudicate over cases without a member. I am now told that the commission has just begun work.

This brings me back to a subject that I have written about earlier too in my column - the dismal state of consumer courts in the country. More than a decade has passed since the consumer courts came into existence. Yet, the consumer justice system in the country is still a far cry from what is envisaged under the Consumer Protection Act.

But delays, some caused by state governments and some caused by the courts themselves, continue to drag down the process of justice.

It is now obvious that consumers and consumer groups have to play an active role in ensuring proper implementation of the Consumer Protection Act.

In fact, but for the pioneering efforts of a Delhi-based group, Common Cause, which sought the help of the Supreme Court to get all the states and union territories to constitute the quasi judicial bodies, several states would probably not have bothered to implement the law at all.

The law prescribed a simple method of resolving consumer disputes, yet consumers complain of unnecessary adjournments, uncalled for procedural complications. In order to overcome some of these problems, the National Commission has issued certain guidelines on the procedure to be followed by the courts.

Consumers should bring to the notice of the National Commission, any violations of the guidelines.

- (a) Punctuality, says the National Commission, must be strictly observed by courts while holding sittings,
- (b) The courts should have sittings on five days in a week.
- (c) The courts should discourage requests by lawyers for accommodation of their convenience for attending other courts,
- (d) Post only as many cases for each day as can be reasonably disposed of on that day. Carry-forward unfinished part of the day's cause list to the next succeeding day.
- (e) Dismissal of appeals for default of appearance should be avoided as the party may be too poor to travel to the capital city to appear before the court.
- (f) Certified copy of the order is to be forwarded to the parties free of charge at the earliest.
- (g) In cases pertaining to medical negligence, insist on expert evidence wherever technical questions are involved.

The National Commission has also suggested that the courts undertake preliminary scrutiny and screening of complaints for weeding out frivolous, false and vexatious cases and matters which are manifestly outside the purview of the Act.

*(Pushpa Girimaji in Times of India)*



## CONSUMER MOVEMENT AND MEDIA

CONSUMER courts under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 at district, state and national level have significantly contributed in building up the consumer movement in India. Similarly, consumer organisations at national and state level and consumer activists are also playing important role in creating awareness among the consumers about their rights.

Despite these efforts consumer movement in India has a long way to go to make the consumer the focal point of all activity. There is, however, no doubt that the present millennium belongs to him and that his position is bound to undergo a sea change in India in the very first decade of the 21st century, especially in respect of his basic needs, like safe drinking water, electricity, shelter, medical and health care, education, employment, supply of unadulterated food articles and non-spurious medicines and above all 'better governance'.

However, the world over, the media, print and electronic, is the most potent instrument in building up public opinion in favour of consumers. Media has a crucial role in creating awareness, and also in informing and educating the consumer about his rights. There is no doubt that media in India has been taking increasing interest in consumer problems. There is, however, considerable scope for greater role for it to support consumer causes.

Newspapers in India with a few notable exceptions have confined themselves to publishing, in a limited way, consumer complaints or grievances in complaint or letters to the editor columns. The complaint columns are mostly weekly or fortnightly. The language newspapers, which have much wider reach, find it difficult to cover consumer grievances because of lack of space.

The electronic media-radio and TV are more effective instruments in creating awareness and education on consumer problems. Though radio is less glamorous than TV, it has much wider reach. While TV is largely urban oriented, radio is listened to in the rural areas where majority of people live. While one finds occasional discussions, talks, etc. on radio on important consumer days and also brief coverage of important decisions of the Supreme Court on consumer matters, there is no sustained focus on problems of consumers. A conscious effort to create awareness to them is missing. The need is to orient radio programmes to consumer education and guidance. This can be done through frequent discussions, talks, skits, plays, and general and special audience programs.

TV is more effective instrument of communication and has greater impact. It is widely used in developed countries to promote consumer interests. The TV coverage in India at present is confined to reporting important court cases or telecast of observance important consumer days. Electronic media in India needs to play more pro-active role in creating consumer awareness.

Media in India has to catch up with its counterpart in other countries. It is an irony that while newspapers give a lot of space and that too in separate sections to sports, business, education, cultural activities, city events, etc, there is no earmarked space for consumer problems. Even without cutting advertisements, newspapers can give more extensive coverage to consumer problems by drastically pruning unimportant international news, which is not of much interest to a large number of readers. The fillers, which are readily available to newspapers through foreign news agencies, should be discarded in favour of news and views on consumers. At least a page can be reserved for consumer affairs covering consumer complaints, court cases, news and views on consumer problems, etc. If there is a separate consumer page the consumers can look forward to it in the same manner as readers interested in sports, business, etc, see their respective sections at present. The scattering of consumers interest news on different pages makes it inconvenient to see it at a glance. It loses the desired impact.

The regional papers, which have much wider reach, should give more coverage on consumer



problems, including the decisions taken by district consumer forums and State commissions on consumers' complaints.

The consumer awareness can be build up in print media through special articles, features, investigating reporting, and coverage of wide spectrum of topics of consumer interest. The investigating journalism can cover consumer protection issues - such as food adulteration, spurious products, misleading advertisements, unfair trade practices etc. Writing on consumer problems could include issues like prices and quality of goods and services, implication and decision of consumer courts, evaluation of products and services etc.

Apart from daily newspapers, general magazines, in English, Hindi and other Indian languages can provide separate sections for consumer news and views. There are a few magazines at present exclusively devoted to consumer's affairs. There is need for more such magazines. The magazines, general and specific should also provide information on new products and services, their plus and minus points, in terms of quality, price etc. to facilitate the decision making on competing brands of products and services.

There is no doubt that media in India at the present stage of consumer movement can make significant contribution in creating awareness on consumer problems. This is possible with greater commitment of media to consumer causes.

*(D.S. Mehta in Indian Express)*

---

Husband: I know you are having a lot of trouble with the baby, dear, but keep in mind, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world."

Wife: How about taking over the world for a few hours while I go shopping?

...

A couple was celebrating the birth of their first child, son. After the party was over, the husband spoke to his wife, "My dear, I have a modern outlook on the size of a family. I think one son is enough for us. So if you don't mind, I like to undergo a vasectomy, what do you think".

"Do as you wish", replied the wife. "You have your vasectomy now. I will have my hysterectomy after I have the third child."

...

A couple was celebrating the arrival of their child after 10 years of their marriage. Husband was attending to the guests and they were all congratulating him. Wife was standing nearby and felt ignored. She shouted at the husband and said, "I don't know why you are accepting congratulations. Had I remained dependent on you, I would have never become pregnant".

...

The truest expression of a people is in its dance and its music. Bodies never lie.

...

Age does not protect you from love. But love, to some extent, protects you from age.

...

A person visiting a foreign country, of which he was unable to read the local language, asked a youth what their newspapers generally reported.

The young man's reply was "Our newspapers contain truths, half-truths and lies. The truths are in the sports section, the half-truths in the meteorological section, and the lies everywhere else."

...

My cousin, a singer, recently won a colour television as first prize at a music competition. The following day, some neighbours came home, admired his new TV set, and enquired about the cost. My cousin's father replied, "You won't believe it, but we got it for a song."

...

The rural golf course in the country had narrow fairways cut through two-and-a-half-metre high elephant grass.

During a tournament, a friend insisted on looking for a ball he had hooked into the rough. We joined the caddies in the search, in a vain attempt to recover the ball. Several minutes later we heard the distant bellow of my friend: "Forget the ball. Come and find me."

...



---

## ON ENVIRONMENT

### Genetically Modified Trees

On account of rapid increase in the population, excessive use of fossil fuel and deforestation the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> level has increased from 260 ppm (parts per million) before the industrial revolution to over 360 ppm. This has resulted in superseding the historic capacity of the oceans to dissolve atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and the ability of the plants to hide any excess as biomass, leading to the rise of global temperature. Currently contemplated remedies include energy/carbon tax, measures to improve energy efficiency, switching to gas-fired or nuclear power stations, developing renewable energy sources such as wind power, etc. But these options are not only very cumbersome but also far from being economic. In view of this, the genetically modified plants promise a great future. There are numerous benefits, which we can draw from the genetically modified plants. These plants can help not only in bringing wasteland under cultivation but can also solve the problems of energy and food crisis. Plant biotechnology has come a long way. The technology has already proven to bring benefits for crops and is now being applied to trees. There will however be many problems to be solved before these benefits can be fully realised.

### Stormwarning

We often forget that we live on a changing planet. Continents are drifting, mountains are colliding, temperature is changing and air masses are moving. The world has become more vulnerable to natural disasters. It is more densely populated and much of that population is crowded into cities. The year 1999 was a bad year for natural disasters, with floods, cyclones, and earthquakes. The disasters caused by volcanoes, earthquakes, storms, floods, soil erosion, global warming, hurricanes and tornadoes are no doubt natural but humanity as a whole is also responsible for these calamities. The earth's climate is changing. The last decade has seen some of the hottest years ever recorded across the world. Burning of irreplaceable resources, soil erosion caused by clearing of trees to farm, or to use for building or burning, leaves huge areas open to soil erosion without the roots that once caged the soil. The earth is getting warmer and warmer and the sea level is rising both through expansion and ice melting. Carbon-dioxide and other green house gases from power stations, industry, the burning of rainforests and vehicles are forming blanket around the earth that traps heat instead of allowing it reflect into space and this causes global warming. Sooner we wake up to the warning, the more likely it is that human beings will be around to see the millennium.

### Pleasure of walking

From archaic times through antiquity and the renaissance and right into the early twentieth century, basic human postures - lying, sitting, standing and running - have remained the same. But basic human movements have changed radically only in walking. We not only walk less than did our ancestors, we have almost eliminated the need to walk. It has become obsolete. Locomotion has become mechanised, from remote control devices to, of course, automobiles. A practising psychologist has found that during periods of acute psychological turmoil, walking is an activity to which one naturally turns. Walking calms turmoil. Prisoners circumambulate the yard, animals exercise back and forth in their cages, the anxious pace the floor - waiting for the baby to be born or to hear news from the boardroom. Walking takes on symbolic significance as we place one foot after the other, left-right in a balanced pace. Walking is the best way to get the stuck, depressed state of mind into an organic rhythm.

---

A doctor told his patient that his problem was caused by worrying too much about money. "Just the other day," said the doctor, "I had a fellow in here sick with worry about not being able to pay his tailor's bill."

"I know," said the patient, "I'm his tailor!"



## FACTS ABOUT INDIA WHICH WE SHOULD ALL KNOW

- \* **There are 3.22 Million Indians in America.**
  - 38% of Doctors in America are Indians.
  - 12% of Scientists in America are Indians.
  - 36% of NASA employees are Indians.
  - 34% MICROSOFT employees are Indians.
  - 28% of IBM employees are Indians.
  - 17% of INTEL employees are Indians.
  - 23% of Indian community in America holds a Green card.
  - Top 100 Indian owned U.S. Companies generate \$ 2.2 billion providing jobs to around 21000 people.
- \* The world's first university was established in Takshashila in 700 BC. Here, more than 10,500 students from all over world studied more than 60 subjects. The University of Nalanda built in the 4th century BC was one of greatest achievements of ancient India in the field of education. The Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsang also studied here.
- \* Sanskrit is the mother of all the European languages. (A report in Forbes magazine, July 1987).
- \* Sanskrit is the most suitable language for computer software (a report in Forbes Magazine, July 1987).
- \* Art of navigation: The art of navigation was born in the river Sindh (India) 6000 years ago. The very word 'Navigation' is derived from Sanskrit 'Nou' (Boat) and 'Gati' (Speed).
- \* Bhaskaracharya (5th century AD) calculated the time taken by the earth to orbit the sun hundreds of years before the western astronomers. Time taken by earth to orbit the sun was mentioned: 365.258756484 days.
- \* The value of "pi" was first calculated by Budhayana, and he explained the concept of what is known as the Pythagorean Theorem. He discovered this in the 6th century long before the European mathematicians.
- \* Quadratic equation were discovered by Sridharacharya in India in the 11th century. The largest numbers the Greeks and Romans used were 106, whereas Hindus used numbers as big as  $10^{53}$  (10 to the power 53) with specific names as early as 5000 BC during the Vedic period. Even today, the largest used number is Tera  $10^{12}$  (10 to the power of 12).

---

A man who was visiting China tried to tell the waitress that he wanted a glass of orange juice, but couldn't make himself understood. Finally, he pointed to the orange badge she was wearing on her breast and made drinking gestures.

The girl went away, looking as though she knew what he wanted, and brought back a glass of milk.

...

"If you promise not to smoke until you are 21.", I announced one day to my three children, "I will give you each Rs. 300 on your 21st birthday."

My 17-year-old daughter spoke up immediately. "Golly! Rs. 300! That's wonderful," she said, "I'll promise."

My 15-year-old son was a bit hesitant, "I'll have to think about it," he said. "Twenty-one is a long way off and I'm not sure that I like being tied down."

I turned to my ten-year old son, who had been listening with a troubled expression. "What about you, Danny" I asked.

"Oh, Daddy," he said. "Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

...

A famous composer got a letter from his tax office: "We are surprised to find a composer with your talents earning so little." The musician wrote back, "Dear Sirs, I share your surprise!"

...

Who of us is mature enough for offspring before the off-spring themselves arrive?" The value of marriage is not that adults produce children but that children produce adults.



## HELP YOU TO RELAX

For most people, simple relaxation is difficult to achieve. Telling yourself not to get upset in the midst of an upsetting situation is rarely effective. Yet we feel battered by the various demands of our jobs, families and problem-fraught environment. Usually we react with tension, which tends to lock muscles, raise blood pressure, and subject us to a whole host of diseases caused or aggravated by stress, including peptic ulcers, migraine headaches, heart trouble, arthritis, back pain, even diabetes.

By mastering the techniques almost anyone can learn to "turn off" tension and anxiety at will. The methods can be put to work in the midst of stressful situations or used as a regular routine for soothing away the day-to-day strains of living.

To learn the techniques at home, you need to practise in a quiet room. Ideally, you should spend 30 minutes a day for three two-week periods - but if you can spare only a few minutes a day, an abbreviated programme should still prove beneficial. You can read the instructions to yourself, step by step, or have them read to you. Some students record the instructions on a tape recorder, then play them back while practising.

Exercises for the first two-week period are designed to demonstrate the difference between feelings of tension and feelings of relaxation. They make you more alert to tension that may be building up in your body, and begin to show you the physical mechanisms for realising it.

The second two weeks of the course focus on mental methods that can help peel away layers of tension and anxiety. You begin to realize you can become relaxed just by thinking about it. In short, this stage produces relaxation on demand.

The final two weeks of the training are spent conjuring up relaxed feelings while sitting, standing and walking. The goal is to enable you to relax anywhere, in any situation. It's a lot like driving a car. When you're first learning, you're very conscious of everything you do. But with practice, it all becomes automatic.

### Stage-I

Lie on your back in a darkened room, with eyes closed, arms at your sides, legs uncrossed. Place pillows under your neck, knees and feet if that increases your comfort. Loosen or remove binding clothing-shoes, belts, tight collars. Alternately contract and release parts of your body, one at a time. When you are tensing, try to make your muscles tighter and tighter and hold for about 30 seconds. Then let go very slowly and feel the relaxation developing. Here is the recommended sequence of tension and relaxation.

- \* Clench each fist.
- \* Bend both elbows and tighten your biceps, hard.
- \* Rigidly straighten both arms.
- \* Wrinkle your forehead until you feel tension moving across your scalp.
- \* Frown deeply, to tense every muscle in your face.
- \* Close your eyelids as tightly as possible.
- \* Clench your teeth and notice the tension in your jaws, cheeks and neck.
- \* Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth.
- \* Press the back of your head firmly into your pillow or against the floor.
- \* Push your chin against your chest and strain your head forward.
- \* Shrug your shoulders up to your ears.

Pause here. Think about a feeling of relaxation spreading from your fingertips up to your scalp and down to your neck and shoulder.



- \* Now concentrate on your midsection. Inhale as deeply as you can and hold before slowly exhaling. Repeat.
- \* Tense your abdominal muscles as tightly as possible without pulling them in.
- \* Pull in your stomach and hold.
- \* Arch your back and hold as long as you can.

Pause again. Think about relaxation spreading from your head down through your shoulders and arms. Then imagine that feeling spreading even deeper into your chest, back and stomach.

- \* Concentrate on your legs and feet. Press both heels hard against the floor.
- \* Point feet and toes away from your head as far as possible.
- \* Point toes towards your head.

Pause and think about feeling relaxed, starting with your toes and slowly moving up your body. Try to imagine the tension you'd feel if you were actually lifting your legs. Enjoy your relaxed state as long as you like. If you feel yourself becoming tense later on, try to recapture the "letting go" feelings you experienced.

### Stage-II

Lie comfortably in a darkened room, breathe deeply several times and try to feel a warm, heavy, relaxed sensation spreading through your body as you slowly exhale. Think about a wave of calm flowing over you in a slow, logical sequence.

Spend a minute or so thinking the word "relax" each time you exhale. Next, think of other stimulus words: calm, serene, tranquil, warm, restful, peaceful and the like. Pause after each word and try to associate feelings of relaxation with it. Pick two words that seem most calming to you and repeat them slowly about 20 times while you relax more and more deeply. "With practice, you'll be able just to say those words to yourself in tense situations and touch off relaxed feelings".

For several minutes, imagine relaxation spreading slowly through your body, starting at your forehead and ending with your toes. Think of the sensations involved as it spreads from one muscle or area to another.

Imagine a blank blackboard, then put the numbers one through ten on it, one at a time. As each appears, try to relax more deeply and capture the sensations suggested by a different stimulus word (warmth, tranquillity, serenity). By the time you reach ten, you should be totally relaxed.

### Stage-III

Start each daily session lying comfortably on your back, breathing deeply several times and thinking about relaxation spreading through your body. Use your stimulus words and try to capture feelings of calmness. After you feel tension begin to drain away, move on to the next steps :

- \* Imagine a scene you find very relaxing: a sunny beach, a cabin in the woods, a snowy evening, a mountain lake, a fireside. Savour the scene for a few minutes. This is your "personal relaxing image" and, like your key stimulus words, can be used to defuse tense situations as you become adept at reacting to it.
- \* Sit comfortably in a chair, with eyes closed, arms at your sides. One at a time and then together, raise your arms. Feel the tension of holding them up, then let them flop down in release. Repeat, holding a deep breath as you raise your arms, then exhaling as they flop. While your arms are up, concentrate on keeping the rest of your body relaxed.
- \* Stand up and try to recapture feelings of relaxation - especially in your shoulders, stomach and arms. With your eyes still closed, walk back and forth a short distance, swinging your arms gently and working to switch off any tension that may be creeping in.
- \* Breathe slowly and regularly while standing still and thinking about relaxation spreading slowly through your body. Use your stimulus words to deepen the feeling.
- \* Lie down and see how quickly you can regain a calm sensation all over your body. Then enjoy your personal relaxation image for at least one minute.



FROM BUSYBEE COLUMN OF "AFTERNOON", MUMBAI

The chief told me: "The Bombay Municipal Corporation has been put in the Nair Hospital. Check out how it is."

So I went to the Nair Hospital, waited for the clerk at the inquiry to finish his tea, go to the bathroom, come back, then asked: "Please, could you tell me which ward is the Bombay Municipal Corporation in?"

The clerk opened a register, looked at it, then said: "Patient's name?"

"Bombay Municipal Corporation," I said.

The clerk wet his finger, traced it down the register, and said: "There is no Bombay Municipal Corporation, only Brihan Mumbai Mahapalika."

"Same thing," I said, "Could you tell me which ward is it in?"

"No wards. our wards are full, patients are lying on the floor between beds," the clerk said. "It is admitted in the hospital's auditorium."

A young doctor, carrying a stethoscope like other young people carry mobile phones, showed me the way to the auditorium. "Anybody in the family?" he asked.

"Well, no, not exactly, but I have known the corporation for some 50 years now, ever since Murli Deora was a member there," I said.

In the auditorium, there were a lot of what I took to be visitors around, drinking tea and eating samosas. Hardly the way to look after a patient who needs quiet and sleep, I thought. But then what can you expect from a municipal hospital.

A nurse was passing by, I stopped her and asked: "Sister, how is the patient? Serious?"

"You will have to ask the house doctor in charge," the nurse said. "Anyway, I am going off duty now".

The house doctor was more cooperative. "It is a serious case of 80 per cent burns. The corporation was caught in a very bad fire. We should have put it in the ICU, but that is not a decision I can make."

"Is the patient able to talk?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, in fact it has been talking all the time. I am told that at its own hall, before it got burnt down in the fire, that is all it has been doing, talk, talk and talk.

"Then I have your permission to talk to it?"

"It is fine with me, you will have to get the mayor's permission," the house doctor said.

The mayor looked like the patient, so did all the others present, including those having tea and samosas. The mayor said: "I am so glad you have taken the trouble to come and see us. So also all the others who have come. But where is the municipal commissioner! He should have been the first person to come and see us, but there is no sign of him."

"I am sure he will come," I said. "Meanwhile, are you comfortable in the hospital."

"I can't stand the hospital stench," the mayor said. "I wish they had put the municipal corporation up at Jaslok or Hinduja."

Occasionally, at cocktail parties, a minister wanders in like an exotic bird out of his native woods. The other evening, at a cocktail party, there was one of them, a small round figure in a long white coat.

"Have you met the minister," said the host, "Come, I will introduce you."

The minister, when he was told who I was said: "O, ho." As if he read me every day. I doubt it. I have a few loyal, readers but they do not belong to the ministerial classes. Still, I had to grant that he had the grace to pretend to know me. I returned the grace.

"You must be finding your new portfolio very challenging," I said, not knowing what ministry he was in charge of. Yes, very challenging", he said, "It is both challenging and carries a lot of responsibility, but I like that."

Later, I asked the host what the minister's portfolio was. He thought for a moment and said he knew but he had forgotten. "But he is a good man," he said.

I agreed. He spent the evening listening to anybody who talked to him. And when some social oaf tried to tell him how disappointed he was with the government and politicians, and how he had little hope of them doing anything worthwhile, he listened to the oaf, head carefully tilted on one side.

The minister carried a glass with him the entire evening. And he carried it in a peculiar way, with one hand, palm down pressed flat over the top of the glass, like a precaution against spilling the contents. I do not know whether he replenished it, and what was in the glass, and whether he drank it. It does not matter to me. So long as politicians do not preach to others not to drink, I do not mind what they do.

I know ministers who in public take their whiskey with coke, to change the colour of the liquid and pretend they are drinking coke. Others drink their liquor in metal tumblers, so that the contents may not be identified. Though it is a dead giveaway, everybody else drinking in glasses, the minister in a steel tumbler. And some politicians are given their drinks with a napkin wrapped around the glass, another giveaway.

My minister was nice. He did not try to conceal what he was drinking, and probably it was something non-alcoholic. And he did not preach, make speeches, he hardly spoke. He smiled a lot, nodded his head and agreed with everything everybody said. Through the evening, he moved from one small circle of guests to another, always being on the fringe of these circles. And he listened to people. He was indeed a bird out of his woods.

Next morning, my host rang up, he had remembered the minister's portfolio. I was happy to note it was an important portfolio.



## OUR ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES

COMMON CAUSE, a registered Society with membership all over the country and operating on All India basis, has earned reputation and credibility as an Organisation dedicated to public causes for seeking redress for problems of the people. Its initiative in public interest litigation, for solving the common and collective problems of the people, has greatly contributed to the evolution and spread of the system in the country and its adoption by the people on a substantial scale for effecting redressal of public grievances.

A large number of writ petitions have been filed by the Organisation in the Supreme Court and Delhi High Court, and quite a few important cases have been taken to the National Commission established under the Consumer Protection Act. The very first case taken up by COMMON CAUSE, almost two decades ago soon after its establishment, related to the problems of pensioners. Almost four million pensioners benefited from the three important decisions which the Organisation was able to secure from the Supreme Court, relating to the extension of liberalisation of pension, restoration of commutation

### OUR GRATEFUL THANKS

*We have the privilege of receiving assistance also from the well known Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Foundation which is supporting various projects and activities connected inter alia with consumer awareness, entrepreneurship development, economic and civic education, environment protection, legal services, income generation and rural development. The Foundation is named after the known socio-liberal statesman Friedrich Naumann and works towards his ideals and the vision of Liberal society. In India the Foundation operates from USO House, 6, Special Institutional Area, New Delhi-110067*

*We are also grateful to Kumari L.A. Meera Memorial Trust, Kerala, for providing us financial assistance for our activities.*

of pension and extension of the scheme of family pension. An important matter relating to the pending criminal cases of the courts of the country was taken to the Supreme Court. In our writ petition specific suggestions were submitted for adoption of procedures for dealing with backlog. The important decision given by Supreme Court in this case led to the discharge of large number of accused persons and release of prisoners whose cases had dragged on for long periods. These directions have brought about termination of hundreds of thousands of cases all over the country. On the subject of general malfunctioning of Blood Banks a writ petition was formulated and taken to the Supreme Court. Directions given by the court on this important matter has led to the evolution of system for registration of Blood Banks and stoppage of use of professional blood donors. On the general matter of corruption and establishment of the institutions of LOKPAL and LOK AYUKTAS in the country the Supreme Court, on a writ petition of the organisation, gave a verdict of severe punishment in a particular case, and the matter relating to the appointment of Lok Ayuktas has continued to be pursued by issuing direction to all States. On another writ petition the Supreme Court gave very important direction in relation to the conduct of election campaigns by the political parties, in relation to a provision which has been

incorporated in the election law. The Court also directed strict compliance with law in relation to the submission of Income-tax Returns by the political parties.

In Delhi High Court a number of writ petitions have been filed by the organisation. Problems of general importance, such as anomalies arising in the Property Tax and the difficulties encountered in the operation of old Rent Control laws, have been taken up and are being pursued. There has been large-scale theft of electricity in Delhi on account of which electric distribution has often got disrupted and the authority has had to resort to load-shedding; these problems have been taken to Delhi High Court and are being pursued. A major problem in Delhi has been the large-scale establishment of unauthorised residential colonies. There has been demand for their regularisation; this was challenged by the organisation and the matter continues to be further pursued.

An important matter relating to the Rail Disasters which have taken place in the country in recent years has also been taken to the Supreme Court. Another very important matter recently taken to the Supreme Court relates to functioning of Fake Universities and ineligible Teaching Shops. The National Commission established under the Consumer Protection Act has, on our submission, issued certain important decisions on matters such as use of iodized salt, stoppage of malfunctioning in relation to intravenous fluids, operation of buses on Delhi roads and strikes by Banks and Air India. Important decisions in general interest of consumers secured from the Supreme Court include establishment of Consumer Forums in all districts of the country and price printing also on all imported packages.

**Membership of the organisation is open to all. Membership fees are Rs. 100 for annual membership for individuals, Rs. 500 for life membership and Rs. 200 for annual membership of organisations and associations. Quarterly Periodical COMMON CAUSE goes free to all members; it has no separate subscription. Donations to COMMON CAUSE are eligible for exemption available under Section 80-G of Income Tax Act. Everybody can take membership of the organisation. No form is required. Send your name and address, written in capital letters, along with cheque/DD, drawn in favour of COMMON CAUSE.**