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Grievance Redressal Mechanism Of E-Commerce Players Not Up To Mark: Consumer Affairs Secretary

Addressing an event organised by the Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI), Singh said the number of complaints registered on the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has gone up to 90,000 in November compared to 40,000 in the same month last year



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The grievance redressal mechanism of many big e-commerce players is not up to the mark as the number of complaints received by the National Consumer Helpline has risen sharply over the last four years, Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said on Thursday.

Addressing an event organised by the Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI), Singh said the number of complaints registered on the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has gone up to 90,000 in November compared to 40,000 in the same month last year.

"Four years back, the number of complaints pertaining to e-commerce transactions was 8 per cent of the total complaints. Last month, it was 48 per cent of the total complaints," he said.

"That means that grievance redressal system of many of the big e-commerce companies is not working up to the mark," he added.

Singh noted that the power equation between the consumer and seller has suddenly changed. "Consumer is getting weaker and weaker, that's where the role of this ministry becomes important," he added.

The Secretary shared that in his various interactions with corporates across the sector, including edutech, cab aggregators, food delivery platforms, online gaming platforms and e-commerce companies, he has conveyed that they cannot "take consumers for a ride."

The corporates have been asked to self-regulate, he added.

The NCH provides services in 10 languages at present, which will increase to 22 in the future, he said.



Talking about other initiatives of the ministry, the Secretary said the government will soon come out with guidelines for social media influencers, making it mandatory for them to disclose if they have taken money to endorse products.

He also said the consumer interest watchdog CCPA is investigating complaints relating to pricing by cab aggregators like Ola and Uber.

Expressing concern over 5.27 lakh cases pending in consumer courts at district, state and national levels, Singh said the government is making efforts to address this problem.

Out of the total pending cases, 1.8 lakh pertain to the insurance sector and another 80,000 cases relate to banking, he added.

Singh said there are some "systematic issues" and that have been referred to sector-specific ministries concerned.

On misleading advertisements, he said, "We have now developed a framework for social influencers which will be released soon. They have to disclose if they have taken money to endorse the product."

On the Legal Metrology Act, Singh said more reforms are needed and sought suggestions from the industry. He also said recently the Cabinet has approved a bill which will decriminalise certain provisions under the Act.

The government is also developing standards on artificial intelligence and sustainable packaging.

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