



## SC Calls For Permanent Consumer Redressal Bodies

**For Prelims:** [National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission](#), [e-commerce](#), [Directive Principles of State Policy](#), [Central Consumer Protection Authority](#), [Dark Patterns](#)

**For Mains:** Constitutional and Legal Framework of Consumer Protection in India, Consumer Rights Enforcement, Impact of Digital Economy and E-commerce on Consumer Rights

[Source:BS](#)

### Why in News?

The [Supreme Court \(SC\) of India](#) urged the Centre to set up permanent adjudicatory bodies for consumer disputes, emphasizing that consumer rights are **constitutionally protected** and need a stable framework due to gaps in implementing the [Consumer Protection Act, \(CPA\) 1986](#).

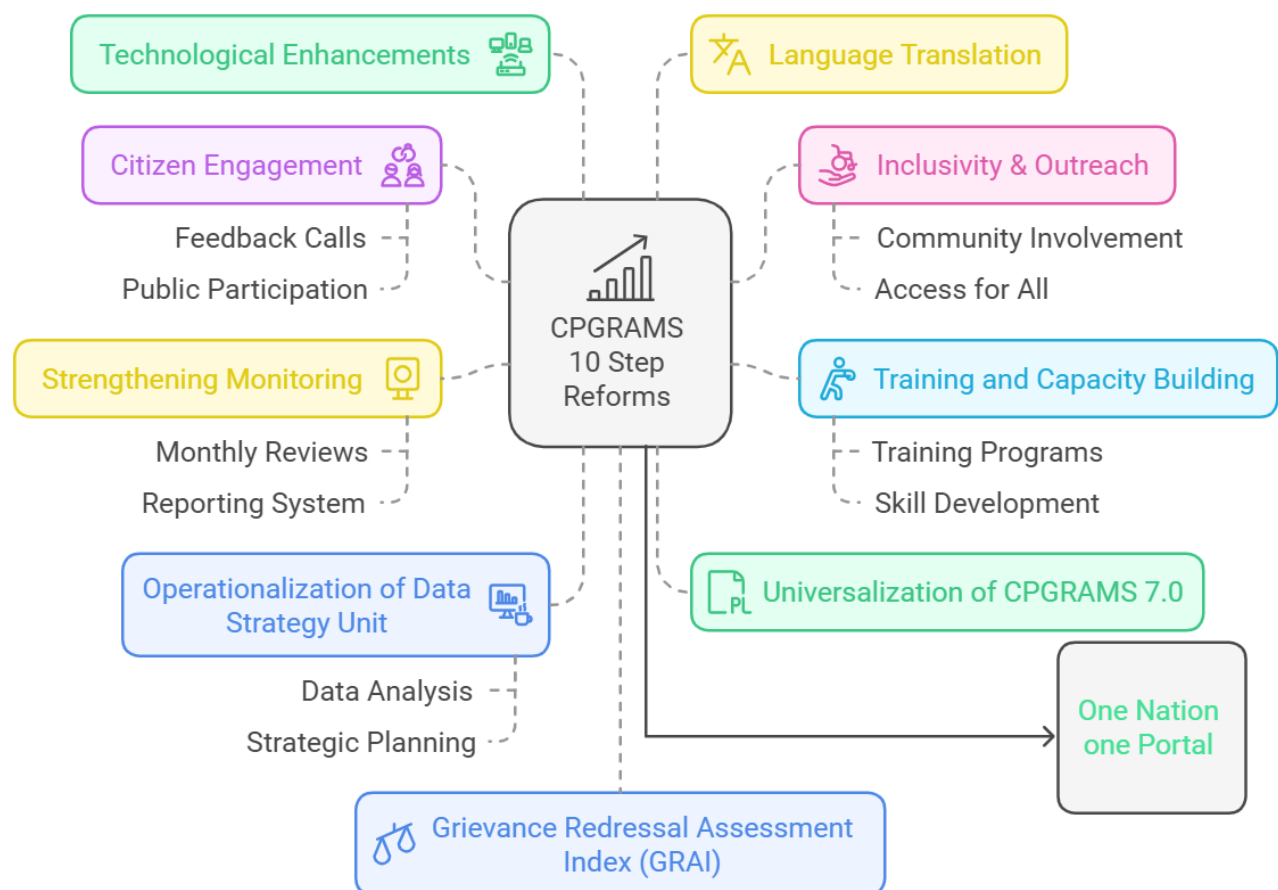
### What is the Need for a Permanent Consumer Dispute Resolution Body?

- **Judicial Endorsement of Permanency:** The SC noted that temporary appointments in consumer forums lead to delays and inefficiency.
  - It recommended setting up **permanent bodies with full-time presiding officers and staff**, possibly headed by sitting judges. This would ensure continuity, professionalism, and better justice delivery.
- **Systemic Pendency and Delays:** As per the [National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission \(NCDRC\)](#), over **5.5 lakh cases** were pending across forums as of 2023.
  - Consumer Councils suffer from vacant posts, and poor digital infrastructure, resulting in delays in cases. Adequate staffing and infrastructure are essential for timely consumer redressal.
- **Rise in Digital and Cross-Border Consumer Disputes:** India's [e-commerce sector](#) is projected to reach USD 200 billion by 2026, and [quick commerce](#) is expected to grow to **USD 9.9 billion by 2029**, with a corresponding surge in complaints related to **online fraud, data privacy, service deficiencies, and cross-border consumer disputes**.
  - Existing consumer forums often lack technical expertise and jurisdictional clarity to tackle new challenges. A redressal body with judges and experts in modern and digital laws is essential for better consumer protection.

### What are the Constitutional and Legal Foundations of Consumer Protection in India?

- **Consumer's Right:** It is the right to **receive accurate information about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, price, and standards of goods or services** and to be protected from unfair practices.

- **Constitutional Backing for Consumer Protection:** Consumer protection in India is rooted in the [Directive Principles of State Policy \(DPSP\)](#) under **Part IV of the Constitution**, which provides a moral and constitutional foundation for welfare-oriented legislation.
  - **Article 37:** It states that while DPSP are not legally enforceable, they are fundamental to governance and must guide the State in lawmaking.
    - The [Consumer Protection Act, 2019](#), and earlier versions are rooted in these principles.
  - **Article 47:** The State shall endeavour to improve nutrition, living standards, and public health, and prohibit the consumption of harmful intoxicants except for medicinal purposes.
- **Legislations for Protection of Consumer Rights:**
  - **Consumer Protection Act (CPA), 1986:** It was enacted to protect consumers in India and resolve disputes through **Consumer Councils at national, state, and district levels**. It addressed issues like adulterated products, and misleading advertisements.
    - The Consumer Protection Act, 1986, grants six key rights to consumers: the **Right to Safety, Right to be Informed, Right to Choose, Right to be Heard, Right to Seek Redressal, and Right to Consumer Education**.
    - The 1986 Act had limitations, **lacking provisions for online transactions, product liability, unfair contracts, and alternative dispute resolution**.
  - **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** It replaced the 1986 Act to address modern consumer challenges. It expanded coverage to all merchandise and enterprise transactions, added new unfair trade practices, included product liability, and regulated unfair contracts.
    - The Act introduced rules for **direct selling and e-commerce**, mandated mediation cells at all levels, and established the [Central Consumer Protection Authority \(CCPA\)](#) to enforce consumer rights.
  - **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Act, 2016:** [Bureau of Indian Standards \(BIS\)](#), India's national standards body, ensures product safety and quality.
    - The Act mandates certification for critical products and allows product recalls and penalties for non-compliance.
  - **Legal Metrology Act, 2009:** Ensures accuracy in **weights and measurements used in commercial transactions**. It promotes fair trade practices, protects consumers, and improves market transparency.
- **Other Initiatives:**
  - **DoCA:** The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) issued [2023 Guidelines on Dark Patterns](#) to curb deceptive online tactics like drip pricing and false urgency.
    - DoCA runs the **"Jago Grahak Jago"** campaign nationwide and introduced the mascot **"Jagruti"** to empower consumers.
    - The [E-Jagruti portal](#), launched by DoCA, is an integrated AI-powered platform streamlining consumer case filing, monitoring, and virtual hearings across all consumer commissions.
    - [E-Dakhil Portal](#) allows online consumer complaint filing.
  - **National Consumer Helpline (NCH):** Handles consumer complaints in 17 languages via toll-free number 1915.
  - **National Consumer Day:** India celebrates [National Consumer Day](#) on 24th December, commemorating the CPA, 1986.
  - **GRAI:** The [Grievance Redressal Assessment Index \(GRAI\)](#) evaluates central ministries based on efficiency, feedback, domain, and commitment using [Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Management System \(CPGRAMS\)](#) data for standardized grievance handling analysis.



## Consumer Rights Under CPA, 1986

Consumer Right	Meaning
<b>Right to Safety</b>	It ensures protection against hazardous goods and services.
<b>Right to be Informed</b>	Consumers must get accurate product details to avoid unfair trade and pressure selling.
<b>Right to Choose</b>	It ensures access to quality goods at fair prices, especially in competitive markets with diverse choices.
<b>Right to be Heard</b>	It ensures that consumer interests are considered in appropriate forums.
<b>Right to Seek Redressal</b>	It ensures the consumers to report issues and get help from consumer bodies.
<b>Right to Consumer Education</b>	It is the right to lifelong consumer education, crucial to reduce exploitation, especially in rural areas.

## What are the Challenges and Suggested Measures for Consumer Protection in India?

Challenge	Suggested Measures

India has <b>low consumer awareness of rights and redressal mechanisms</b> , limiting consumers' ability to seek justice and effectively exercise their rights.	Implement widespread consumer education campaigns like <b>Jago Grahak Jago</b> and integrate consumer rights into school curricula.  Simplify complaint filing by reducing paperwork and formalities to boost <b>consumer activism</b> .
Inconsistent <b>enforcement of product liability provisions</b> leads to difficulty in holding manufacturers accountable for defective products.	Train judicial officers to establish clear enforcement guidelines and build the capacity of prosecuting officers under the <a href="#">Mission Karmayogi</a> .
<b>Multiplicity of grievance redressal platforms</b> (e.g., public distribution systems, consumer rights) across states, combined with <b>uneven implementation of consumer laws</b> in urban and rural areas, leaves rural consumers with less access to redressal and greater vulnerability.	Expand services to rural areas by integrating <b>Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)</b> for e-commerce and fintech grievances, and establish grievance cells in <b>panchayat offices to support illiterate populations</b> .
Limited resources for consumer protection agencies hinders effective law enforcement and creates protection gaps.	Increase funding, hire staff, and improve infrastructure by establishing a permanent, independent consumer grievance redressal body as recommended by the <a href="#">2nd Administrative Reforms Commission</a> .
Lack of effective consumer redressal mechanisms, including <a href="#">alternative dispute resolution (ADR)</a> options, overburdens courts and delays justice delivery.	Promote ADR before litigation; the <b>Dr. T.K. Viswanathan Committee (2024)</b> recommends strengthening arbitration with reduced court intervention and a cost-effective, time-bound framework.

## Conclusion

A robust and permanent consumer redressal mechanism is vital to uphold constitutionally backed consumer rights. It will **address systemic delays, digital-era challenges, and ensure timely, expert-led justice**. Strengthening infrastructure, awareness, and enforcement is key to real consumer empowerment.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Discuss the constitutional foundations of consumer protection in India and analyze the significance of the Supreme Court's recommendation for permanent consumer dispute resolution bodies.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question

### **Prelims**

**Q.1 With reference to 'consumers' rights/privileges under the provisions of law in India, which of the following statements is/are correct ? (2012)**

1. Consumers are empowered to take samples for food testing.
2. When a consumer files a complaint in any consumer forum, no fee is required to be paid.

3. In case of death of consumer, his/her legal heir can file a complaint in the consumer forum on his/her behalf.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: c**

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