

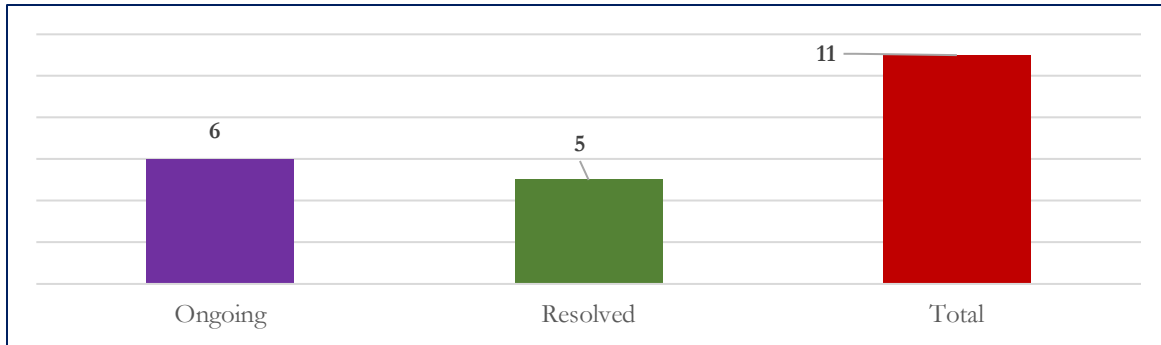
Consumer Protection and Unfair Business Practice Statistics (February 1-28, 2023)

I. Complaints and Redressal

Protecting consumers from unfair business practices and facilitating fair and prompt settlement of consumer grievances are key mandates of the Competition & Consumer Affairs Authority (CCAA).

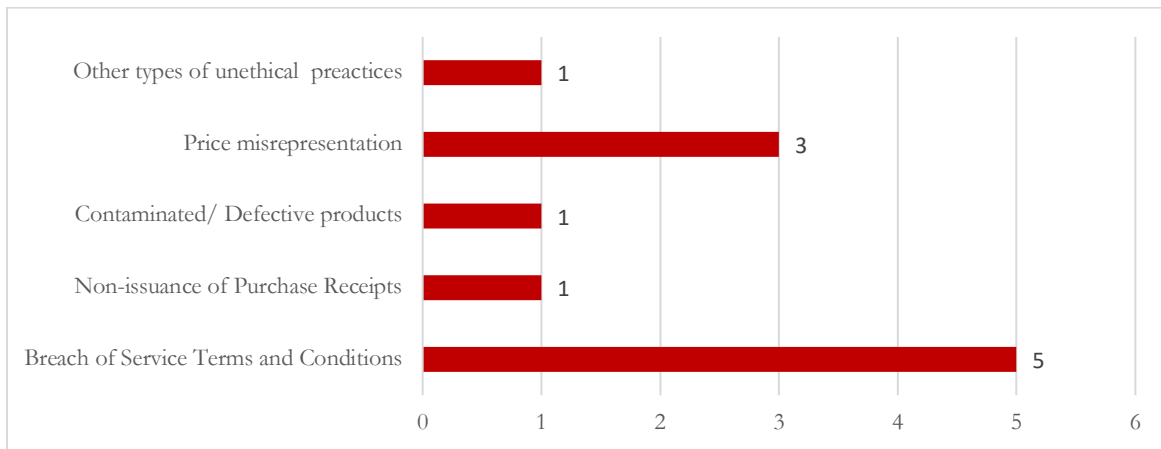
During February, the CCAA received a total of 11 consumer complaints; out of which 5 complaints were resolved successfully while 6 are under investigation or in the process of mediation (Fig 1). All complaints in February were by an individual against business seeking redressal for a perceived wrong done to him/her.

Fig 1: Number complaints received and resolved



Majority of the complaints (almost 50 per cent) were for breach of service terms and conditions by businesses, followed by complaints for misrepresentation of price (consumer being misled to pay prices higher than it actually is worth or is considered reasonable at that point in time) (Fig 2).

Fig 2: Consumer complaints by type of violation



II. Market Surveillance

To be able to protect consumers, the CCAA conducts frequent pre-emptive market monitoring on its own or jointly with relevant organizations, when necessary, to ensure fair trade practices at all times.

For February, the CCAA focussed on Trashiyangtse and Trashigang Dzongkhags. A total of 171 businesses were inspected during February 2023. Different types of businesses in the main markets were covered (Table I). Apart from other checking if businesses are compliant to the minimum market requirements – proper display of prices of goods and services, use of accurate weights and measures, issuance of purchase receipts, and proper and adequate labelling of products – they are also scrutinized for other violations such as sale of expired goods, sale of goods at prices higher than fixed prices (for those goods where prices are fixed by competent government agencies), sale of defective products or adulterated goods, etc.

In general, majority of business entities were compliant to the minimum requirements. Those non-compliant ones were given the opportunity to immediately rectify and make the required changes or were penalized as per the existing law.

Table 1: Number of types of business inspected in Trashiyangtse and Trashigang Dzongkhags

Dzongkhag	Market	Grocery	Auto-mobile workshop	Meat Shop	Saw-mill	PRO	Hardware Shop	Hotel & Restaurant	Bakery	Garment Shop	Fabrication
T/gang	Wamrong	9	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
	Khaling	16	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
	T/gang Throm	13	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3	0
	Rangjung	16	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Kanglung	17	1	1	0	0	0	5	0	3	0
	Pam/Kheri/Chazam	4	7	0	1	1	0	4	0	0	3
T/Yangtse	Doksum	10	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0
	Wangringmo	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T/Yangtse Throm	18	0	1	0	1	0	4	2	1	0

Some of the major findings of the surveillance are as follows:

- 77.8 percent of businesses have pre-printed cash memo/ purchase receipts that are provided upon consumer's request.
- From the 106 grocery shops and 4 bakeries, 57.2 percent of business entities did not adhere to the minimum requirements of product labeling. The problem of inadequate labelling was common on food and food products that were locally produced and packed including livestock products, cookies, chips, sweets, dal,

pickles, puffed rice, popcorn, dry fish and dried red chillies. The products are packaged in plain polyethylene or polypropylene bags.

- 71 percent of business were using calibrated weighing balances and measuring devices. There was 100 per cent compliance by hardware shops and meat shops, while compliance by groceries was 71.2 % and by compliance by PROs and bakery was 60% and 50% respectively.
- Display of prices on goods and services provided by businesses was only about 30.4 %.
- Almost 50 percent of automobile workshops were found selling spare parts without valid business license.
- Stocking and sale of goods past their expiration date was common. Noodles, cup-cakes, biscuits, soft drinks and chips past their expiration date were found displayed for sale in 32 grocery stores (42.6%) in Trashigang and in 15 (48.3%) in Trashiyangtse Dzongkhag.
- A sawmill was found to be selling sawn timber above the rate fixed by the Natural Resource Pricing Committee (NRPC). Further, the measuring device used by the business was not calibrated by the BSB.
- The quantity of fuel dispensed by 3 PROs were found to be within permissible range and the PROs were found complying with the general safety requirements prescribed for fuel stations. There was no adulteration of fuels in any of the PROs.

Rectification and other follow up actions where necessary are being pursued by the CCAA.

III. Disputes referred to Dispute Settlement Committee (DSC) and its status

The CCAA referred a case to the Dispute Settlement Committee (DSC) of Monggar Dzongkhag and two cases to DSC, Thimphu Thromde, after mediations failed. The following cases were referred to DSC:

- A complaint was filed by a consumer against an automobile workshop for allegedly charging exorbitant prices for goods and services for repair of a truck. The DSC of Monggar Dzongkhag ordered the respondent to reimburse a sum of Nu. 23,092.50 within "14 days" from the day the final judgement was made.
- A construction firm was accused of poor-quality in the construction of a residential building by a consumer. The respondent was directed to reimburse the advance amount of Nu. 2,454,500/- with a penal interest rate of 24 percent per annum on the advance amount paid by the complainant. The interest payable to the complainant for thirteen months is computed to Nu.638,170/- for the damages in accordance with the Section 78(a) and Section 80 of the CPA, 2012.
- The consumer had purchased two flight tickets for Paro - Singapore - Jakarta - Bali – Perth sector. The business had apparently failed to provide correct information to the consumer about the requirement of a visa for Bhutanese to enter Indonesia, even to transit. This had resulted in the consumer having to purchase another set of tickets from Singapore to Perth directly. Several attempts of mediation by the CCAA proved

futile, and thus was forwarded to the DSC, Thimphu Thromde. The hearing and discussion of the case is scheduled on February 28, 2023.
