
The Public Newsense

Dear friends and colleagues,

As you may know, CAG came into existence in 1985 and turns thirty this year! CAG has worked to improve public accountability, enhance spaces for public and civic participation, and to create platforms for citizens to voice their concerns. Issues affecting the common citizen in areas of public services, consumer rights, and the environment have emerged as priorities in our work.

We proactively work to push the boundaries of our work and to address the needs of citizens in different contexts. We ushered in this year with an expanded team and several new areas of work have taken root at CAG. You may have already noticed how our work on consumer awareness and protection has expanded to address the concerns of consumers in the digital age. In addition to making electricity governance in Tamil Nadu holistic and inclusive, we have broadened our work on environmental sustainability to include environmental impact assessments (EIA). We are working to create linkages with local communities to help improve their understanding of environmental regulations, laws and the EIA process in order to enable their proactive and effective participation.

The new researchers brought a strong focus on urban governance, a wealth of experience on working on issues of urban poverty and with the urban poor, and a passion for data and technology. Our work on slums and informal settlements seeks to address issues of land rights, tenure security and housing, and access to basic services, such as water and sanitation. CAG has also initiated work on solid waste management, an issue that plagues most Indian cities and has important environmental, public health and livelihoods implications. Our work strongly advocates for a shift to sustainable and inclusive waste management, with a focus on zero waste policies and practices and the inclusion of informal waste workers in the waste management process.

The use of data and technology for social change is now an important part of CAG's approach. Our work with technology is cognizant of existing social, economic and political divides that can influence people's access to public services and information. What we seek to do is devise methodologies that can help them overcome challenges to public services and public accountability posed by the lack of information. We are also exploring ways to reach hard-to-reach communities with the help of digital tools that are low cost and can help them overcome barriers to participation in governance processes.

Our collaboration with the Corporation of Chennai combined our vision to improve transparency and accountability with our passion for the use of data and technology to help improve processes and monitor outcomes of its programmes and policies.

We are fortunate to have a dynamic team that is committed to working towards achieving the various goals that we have set for ourselves, and with your continued, unconditional support we aim to accomplish much more in the ensuing years.

Yours sincerely,
Om Prakash Singh
Executive Director



CAG

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

Vision and Mission

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) is a non-profit, non-political and professional organisation that works towards protecting citizens rights in consumer and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability and participatory decision-making.

At CAG, we have always believed that collective voice reaches farther than the voice of an individual. We have found that it is extremely tough for an individual to work on all these issues, and therefore for a sustainable holistic solution we felt that we need an organisation to co-ordinate and voice the grievances of the public – to make the change.

And therefore at the core of our work is our belief that effective consumer representation is critical for good governance.

Trustees

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Overview of the Chennai Data Portal and Dashboard project

CAG and the Corporation of Chennai (CoC) have a collaboration to create India's first city-level data portal and dashboard. The project is influenced by four key observations. First, there is a large amount of data about the city, spatial and non-spatial, digitised and otherwise, that is available with different government departments and agencies. This data is collected and stored in various formats and locations, making it difficult for both citizens and public officials to access it. There is no central data repository that can facilitate sharing and consequently, different agencies either do not have complete data or duplicate that collected by other agencies. Second, citizens, especially the urban poor, are not able to make their voices heard and are unable to participate either in planning processes or in the monitoring of service providers. Third, government officials admit to being overwhelmed by RTI requests for government data and their inability to provide comprehensive and correct information. Despite the RTI Act, officials often use their discretion to provide information and to delay indefinitely. Last, city departments and agencies responsible for service provision find it time-consuming to collect data and sometimes politically difficult to get information from one another – information that could help them to do their work better.

CAG provides the research support for data management practices, evaluates alternatives and make recommendations for the technology and human resources required to adopt new practices. We aim to set technical standards and to determine the most appropriate models for data collection, storage, publishing and sharing. It will help develop the capacity of Corporation officials to achieve them, and will suggest and support training programmes necessary for the new practices to be adopted. The key element of the collaboration is to develop

in-house capacities for comprehensive data management, analysis and use.

Logic framework

The logic framework which we use at CDP to guide our work is to find the most appropriate answers to the current institutional and organisational challenges. These can range from institutionally easy to difficult to adopt, and financially cheap to expensive to implement. What we aim to do is find those that fall in the intersection of institutionally easy and financially cheap. In order for any local government to improve the quality of public infrastructure and services, it needs to be able to plan and monitor well. For this, high quality spatial data is necessary. One of the objectives of the CDP is to enhance internal oversight and the ability of CoC officials to understand the vast and complex responsibilities they are tasked to manage. It aims to enable easy access to data that previously required months to collect and format. Officials will be able to visualise data in ways that can reveal insights on critical issues and enable them to take decisions on a department and city-wide level. The team will help design and develop a portal that will contain datasets compiled by all departments, zones and wards, and will cover a broad range of topics, from municipal infrastructure and services to health data. It will be interactive and user-friendly, and contain geographic features that can be combined with other data, enhancing the quality of the data. The aim is also to set standards for data quality, interoperability, and comparability.

Methodology

For each data collection exercise, we follow an iterative seven-step process of data collection and analysis to ensure that effort responds to a need for data that supports decision making and the data collected meets well-defined objectives for each exercise. We begin all our data

collection exercises by identifying the need for data for decision making, making every effort to understand the processes by which public services are delivered. We commit a lot of time to understanding the issue, identifying the most appropriate data parameters, designing the survey instrument, preparing the form for use on a mobile device (tablet or phone), testing it and using it to collect the desired data, while keeping costs to a minimum.

Identify need for data collection

We approach this in one of two ways - we identify the need for data ourselves or we respond to a request by a CoC official or department when they need to collect and analyse data. For the latter, we work with the officials to articulate the need for data by first understanding the decisions they make and identifying the data that would help them. The 'Request for Survey' form in Annexure 2 lists the questions to which we seek answers from the officials requesting for data to be collected.

Research the issue and identify parameters to best understand it

For each data collection and analysis exercise, we first undertake basic research to understand the problem and ways by which other municipal authorities identify and address the issue. We identify the elements of the infrastructure and look for the best data parameters that would enable us to understand the issue. We also repeatedly interact with officials and individuals in civil society and academia to build this under-

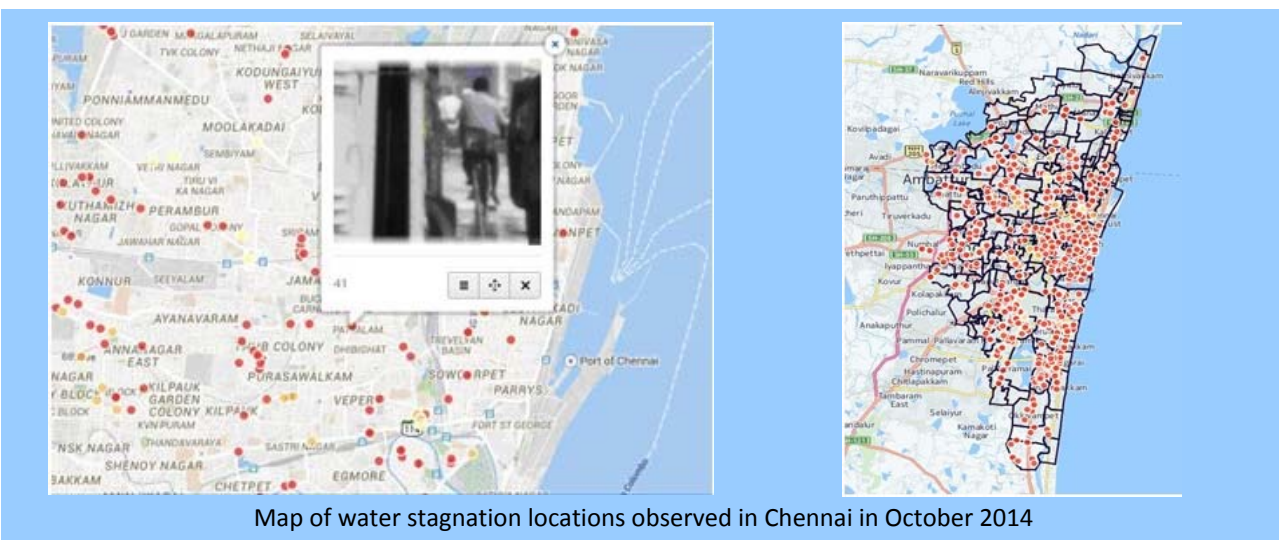
standing, especially to find ways to leverage methodologies that we can adapt to suit the current context without reinventing or duplicating efforts that were already made or exist.

Design and test survey instrument using the parameters identified

Designing a survey includes defining the most appropriate method for capturing each data parameter. For example, for a tree census, we first list types of trees, dimension, age, condition of the ground around the tree, etc as potential elements. Each element is then expanded into parameters, with each having a set of conditions to minimise variance. So the girth of a tree would be measured at a standard height, say 3 feet, from the ground for all trees. One of the most important aspects of the data collection is to keep it free from variances due to interpretation of the person collecting the data. We test each survey instrument multiple times, incorporating the learning and feedback continuously to improve the instrument.

Undertake data collection

The survey team assiduously collects data and the accuracy is monitored by back checks. The survey managers conduct random quality checks to ensure that the process is being followed diligently. However, surveys are only one form of data collection. To make data more complete we need to obtain information that is held informally by various individuals. For instance, information about the locations where buses stop - aside from designated areas - is



held by drivers and conductors. Interacting with several hundred drivers and conductors is definitely a tedious and daunting task, but by choosing to ignore this source of information, officials have relied on proxies that provide inaccurate and incorrect data. In an attempt to reduce these inaccuracies, they continue to use data that is aggregated, such as stage-wise rather than stop-wise information, and largely based on the planned services. In doing so, however, they have ignored the reality of the degree of informality in the delivery of public services and the deviations from plans. What we do is try to identify ways to overcome data gaps by identifying the most appropriate source of each parameter of data, as well as devise the appropriate ways in which they can be collected. Most importantly, we try to find ways to harness the latent knowledge held by officials in various agencies and leverage that to build an understanding of issues of governance.

Transform the data - clean, fill gaps, improve accuracy

The overall objective of transforming data is to ensure that they are complete, accurate and amenable to analysis. By transforming data we mean making it amenable to use. Since the data we need to answer the questions at hand may come from multiple sources and with the use of different collection tools, it is imperative to bring them to a standard format. For instance, much of the data we receive from the CoC is not machine readable. This means that the information is made available to us on paper, or if it is digital, then they are in PDF formats, or worse, images. This requires us to convert them to word and excel formats before we can merge or collate them. Once the data is collected, we clean it to remove potential errors. We also repeat aspects of the survey if we find that the data is not suitable to answer the question(s) that we are trying to address.

Data analysis and visualisation

The analysis of the data is important so that we answer the right questions about the issue, identify patterns and glean information that would be useful. We follow this up with visualis-

ing the data in ways that reveal insights and consider what actions the CoC can take based on this data. We use a variety of open source tools and software to visualise data, including QGIS and CartoDB for spatial visualisations.

Action steps for improved decision making

Since the first step in our work involves understanding the decisions that need to be made, we always consider the ways that the data can inform those decisions. By interacting with CoC officials we try to prepare a step-by-step action plan that can support the officials make targeted interventions. First, we try to identify what steps can be taken right away or in the immediate future, but we always prompt them to consider what could be the actions that would require more time or funds, and always compel them to propose solutions that would be sustainable. The aim for this approach is to address a problem that invariably needs an immediate solution but to also devise mechanisms to improve the organisational ability to avert or minimise such problems systematically and ways to institutionalise them.

Conclusion

Information is power, and the Chennai Data Portal (CDP) project aims to deliver both to the people of Chennai by improving the ways by which data can be used to improve the quality of public services for all residents. We believe this initiative will place the Corporation of Chennai in the forefront of data management and proactive disclosure among other Indian cities, and in league with cities such as London, Barcelona, Chicago and Los Angeles. From placing building approvals online for citizens to report building violations, to garbage collection schedules, the data portal will enable citizens to participate in governance. The portal will be a platform where the local government can partner with citizens to collect data and monitor services, improving the overall quality of data that can be used for policy and decision making and the delivery of services by the Corporation.

Solid Waste Management & Informal Workers

In December 2014, CAG joined and took on the responsibility of anchoring the 'Initiative on Waste, Informal Workers and Chennai's Future', a group of civil society organisations, activists, and researchers, that are working towards the adoption of sustainable and inclusive solid waste management practices in Chennai. Members of the Initiative include Global Alliance of Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), Madras Institute of Development Studies, Pennurimailyakkam, Thozhamai, Arunodhaya, Real Charitable Trust, etc. The Initiative has been responsible for two major developments: one is the adoption of a zero-waste ward level pilot proposal to be implemented in ward 173 by the Corporation of Chennai (CoC); and the second is to convince the CoC to implement a strategy paper on issuing identity cards to waste pickers that would recognise their occupation and safeguard their livelihood. Since joining the Initiative, CAG has been pushing the CoC towards the implementation of these two efforts, in addition to coordinating the efforts of five com-

munity-based organisations to empower waste pickers.

Zero-waste pilot in ward 173: The CoC started the implementation of the pilot in ward 173 in September 2014 with a focus on only MRC Nagar. Till mid-December 2014, we were making considerable progress because of commitment of the then AEE, Mr Venkatesh. With the cooperation of Ramky and the CoC, the door-to-door collection (dt/dc) was streamlined in MRC Nagar. An informal survey of residents in MRC Nagar showed their satisfaction in the dt/dc confirming that the system was working. Through meetings the need to expand the compost pit in MRC Nagar (being run by Earth Recyclers) was recognised and conveyed to CoC. Additionally, Mr Venkatesh had met residents from Keshavapuram and Govindasamynagar (two localities in Ward 173) to expand the dt/dc services of segregated waste and waste processing (organic and inorganic) facilities to these localities.



Unfortunately, Mr Venkatesh, AEE, who had spearheaded the implementation at the zonal office was transferred, and no one has been clearly identified in his stead.

As a result, all components of the project like expanding the door to door collections to additional areas, expanding the compost pit at MRC Nagar, operationalizing the biogas plant in the Amma canteen premises on Kamaraj Salai, and identifying land for establishing resource recovery parks and compost yards, are held up.

Our efforts to contact the officials in the zonal office have not yielded any result as no one is clear of who is responsible to take forward this work. Several residents, especially from Kesha vaperumalpuram and Govindasamy Nagar, have contacted us keen on turning their locality into a zero-waste area. In March 2015 we wrote to the Commissioner, Corporation of Chennai requesting for a review, following which we were invited to meet zonal officials regarding the implementation of the pilot. Unfortunately, these meetings too have not come to fruition and there has been no progress.

ID cards for waste pickers: A vast majority of the informal workers in the waste industry do not have any form of government identification (voter ID card, aadhar card, ration card, etc.) making them invisible to the government and unable to access government welfare schemes aimed at the urban poor. In December 2014, the CoC, in response to a representation made by the Initiative, agreed in principle to issue ID cards to waste pickers.

We have been working with the DC (Health) and the SWM Department at the Corporation of Chennai in preparing the note and circular for approval by the Commissioner and the Mayor for holding of the camps to issue the ID cards and institutionalise the process for accepting applications on a rolling basis. The methodology and the instruments (application form, survey, ID card format, etc.) have been prepared by us and are ready for use. The camps have been postponed twice in February and March, and remain to be rescheduled a third time. Our efforts on this front have been focused on providing the CoC with the documentation that is re-

quired for the formal approval processes. We hope to meet the Mayor, along with our CBO partners, in the coming weeks to push for speedy approval and implementation.

Once ID cards are issued, it will also become possible for waste pickers to access welfare schemes that are aimed at informal workers such as the Rasthriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (National Health Insurance Scheme).

Waste picker empowerment: Pennurimaillyakam, Thozhamai, Arunodhaya, Real Charitable Trust and union worker C. Srinivasan, have been working with us on the issue of waste picker empowerment and welfare. We help them in their efforts to organise camps to enrol waste pickers with the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Welfare Board (TNMWWB), health camps, and awareness programmes. The main event this quarter was a camp to enrol waste pickers with the TNMWWB at Saidapet organised by C. Srinivasan and Ambethkar Peruvai on March 31, 2015, which was attended by over 100 waste pickers.

Safeguarding consumers' interests in the emerging era of e-commerce – CAG study

Internet is changing the way consumers shop and buy goods and services, and has rapidly evolved into a global phenomenon. E-commerce in India has come a long way, from a timid beginning in the 1999-2000, to a period where one can sell and find all sorts of stuff from a high end product to a meagre peanut, online. The world of electronic commerce enables consumers to shop at thousands of online stores from across the world, without leaving the comfort of their home. For many, the internet has taken the place of Saturday afternoon window shopping at the mall!

Advantages of online shopping include availability of wide range of goods at competitive prices, lesser chances of the buyer getting ripped off as consumers are able to compare prices, availability of various schemes and a whole range of offers and discounts and accessibility to cheapest deals. It also saves time and no seller can set a much higher price as the buyer has access to prices all over the world!

However, unlike the offline environment, where consumers enter the store, inspect potential purchases and judge for themselves the trustworthiness of a seller, the online world does not provide the same opportunity to use a "buyer's instinct". Rather, many consumers proceed on faith, knowing precious little about the seller. Thus, while online shopping is con-

venient and easy, it can also quickly turn into a nightmare. The existing laws like the Information Technology Act, Consumer Protection Act, Code of Civil Procedure have their limitations in dealing with issues related to online shopping and therefore, grievance redressal in cases of online disputes becomes a big problem for consumers.

Thus, with the objective to protect the interests of consumers in the emerging era of e-commerce, CAG recently recommended to the Government for specific regulations on e-commerce under the Consumer Protection Act, which includes setting up of an online consumer disputes redressal forum that would facilitate in resolving of consumer disputes that arise with online traders.

To accomplish this, CAG conducted a survey of 1000 online consumers, to understand consumer experiences. In addition, feedback from consumer groups from across the country was received to know about the success of complaints on e-transactions they had dealt with over a period. Besides, information from the cyber crime and IT department of Tamil Nadu was obtained to analyze the number of complaints filed against online retailers, during a certain period and the resultant success. The consumer policies of various web portals were looked at and a study of the current legislations



in other countries that seek to protect consumer rights in e-commerce transactions was also done.

Following this, CAG organized a one-day national seminar on the topic to share the findings of the study and seek inputs. Representatives from lead consumer organizations in the country and experts with vast knowledge on the sub-

ject participated in the event. There were fruitful discussions through the day and everyone agreed upon the fact there was an immediate need for regulations to protect the interests of online consumers.

A booklet and poster to educate consumers on the do's and don'ts of online shopping was prepared and distributed at the seminar.

World Consumer Rights' Day (WCRD) - 2015

In accordance with CI's theme "promoting healthy diets" for WCRD this year, CAG, in association with the Department of Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, prepared pamphlets both, in English and Tamil, titled – Eat the best, leave the rest!!! (Time to think about your health) - to create awareness on the ill effects of junk food, the need for reduced intake of salt and sugar and the importance of nutrition labeling, to be distributed in schools, colleges and to the general public. CAG also reprinted the "Caratoons" poster (snake and ladder game promoting healthy diet) for distribution.



National Conference on Consumer Rights

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs organized a National Conference on Consumer Rights on account of WCRD, in which, CAG's trustee Ms. Tara Murali participated. At the conference, Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, Union minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, launched two new initiatives of the department of consumer affairs aimed at enhancing consumer awareness and strengthening support services to consumers in the country.

The initiatives included a dedicated portal to register Grievances against Misleading Advertisements (GAMA) and Grahak Suvidha Kendras – one-stop consumer centres at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Jaipur, Kolkata, Patna and Delhi.

Net Neutrality

Net neutrality – our right to access any website that we want to, with no infringement from anybody in any form, just about what we are doing today, with free use of all social networking sites and e-commerce websites – is the most debated topic since the past few months! Why so? The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), based on demands from telecom operators to allow them to fix costs for various data services that are transmitted through their networks, intends to regulate this space. It has invited public opinion through a consultation paper on the subject, seeking inputs from various stakeholders. To give an example, in the present day, we subscribe for a particular data pack and use this data to do anything on the internet but, if the regulation comes in force, the telecom operator will dictate what, how and when we could browse the internet! Sounds quite intimidating, isn't it? But that is how it will be!

Now, what does this mean to the common person? When I discussed this subject with a few friends of mine, Sanjana was quick to compare this with the cable television services where we are offered a menu of packages and from which we might subscribe for a different mix of channels and pay accordingly. Very often channels are shuffled at the discretion of the service providers and consumers are made to pay more if they wanted to continue to receive a particular channel. This has been allowed because there are few channels but high investments. However, in the case of the internet there are innumerable websites and mobile applications available in the public domain, with unlimited access to information and use, which would be curtailed in the absence of net neutrality. In the present day with internet being a platform where one can voice their opinion freely, it would become restrictive and a game field for the big players.

Catching up on the last words, Sahana, another friend, immediately expressed her concerns about the chances -rather the lack of it - for the

new entrants into the trade. While established businesses will be in a position to pay for their website to be included in the "free" pack, it will be a big blow to the new and upcoming e-commerce traders. This will lead to anti-competitive practices like cartelization and consumers will be denied access to smaller sellers/service providers and may thus be deprived of best deals at competitive prices.

Rajesh, who was also part of the discussion, raised another important issue - one about education and innovation. For instance, after the recent Delhi rape incident, a company with a social conscience and with which he was associated with, had developed and released a free app that women could use to notify their contacts in case of an emergency. If the company had to pay the telecom service provider to provide the app for free or if there was a cost imposed on the consumer to access the app, then it would limit the number of users. Similar talent by students and budding entrepreneurs would similarly go unnoticed.

However, we all agreed that one group of users of the internet as a source of information has not been mentioned in the online debates on net neutrality - the informal sector. There are many web and mobile services that make relevant information on different agriculture and horticulture crops, sowing, harvesting, control of pests and diseases, weather, crop insurance, prices and the like available to farmers, fisher folk and small traders. Pricing these internet-enabled services could prove to be a deterrent to the organizations that are helping small, informal economic and social groups.

There is strong opposition and publicity against this country-wide and CAG has also submitted its views on the matter to TRAI.

Thus, considering the diverse reasons stated above, it is imperative that TRAI decides on net neutrality that would ensure continued mobility in the internet space and be beneficial to various sections of the society.

‘Lure of incentives leads to mis-selling of financial products’

Hindu Business Line, Jaipur, Feb 21:

A majority of 67 per cent consumers of financial services feel that provision of incentives leads to bank staff providing wrong information or mis-selling of products, says a survey by Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS).

Besides, 56 per cent are unaware of the existence of grievance redressal systems, it added.

According to the study, 76.3 per cent bankers feel that there is a pressure on them to achieve sales targets set out by the bank.

The research was conducted across five cities — Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Jaipur — to collect experiences of financial consumers and bank officials about the impact of sale incentives provided to banking staffs, said Project Coordinator Amarjeet Singh.

RBI Charter of Customer Rights

Hope you are aware that the Reserve Bank of India has released a [Charter of Customer Rights](#), which enshrines broad, overarching principles for protection of bank customers and enunciates the ‘five’ basic rights of bank customers. These are: (i) Right to Fair Treatment; (ii) Right to Transparency; Fair and Honest Dealing; (iii) Right to Suitability; (iv) Right to Privacy; and (v) Right to Grievance Redress and Compensation.

The Reserve Bank has also advised the Indian Banks’ Association (IBA) and the Banking Codes and Standards Board of India (BCSBI) to formulate a “Model Customer Rights Policy” encapsulating the principles enshrined in the Charter. Initially, all the scheduled commercial banks, regional rural banks and urban co-operative banks are expected to prepare their own Board approved policy incorporating the five basic rights of the Charter which, among other things, would contain a monitoring and oversight mechanism for ensuring adherence. The policy, if needed, would have to be suitably dovetailed with the “Model Customer Rights Policy” proposed to be formulated by IBA/BCSBI. The Reserve Bank would monitor the progress and oversee the adherence by banks over a period of time.

Section 66(A) of Information Technology Act Gone. Supreme Court Sides with Free Speech Online

The Supreme Court has scrapped a contentious law that was seen as a major infringement of the freedom of speech online because it allowed the arrest of a person for posting "offensive" content. Section 66(A) of the Information Technology Act, "is unconstitutional and we have no hesitation in striking it down," said Justice RF Nariman, reading out the judgement. "The public's right to know is directly affected by Section 66(A)," he added.

Source: <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/unconstitutional-section-66a-violates-freedom-of-speech-says-supreme-court-749127?pfrom=home-lateststories>

In an historical decision, the NCDRC held that the remedy before a Consumer Forum is primarily a civil remedy, whereas the prosecution before and conviction by a Designated Court, constituted under Maharashtra Protection of Interests of Depositors' Act is a criminal remedy

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), in a significant decision, has held that investors and depositors have a right to seek compensation under the Consumer Protection Act in case of defaults from a financial establishment. In a related case, the Apex Consumer Commission has asked Nagpur-based Shivaji Estate Livestock And Farms Pvt Ltd to refund money invested along with a 9% interest from the date of filing the complaint. The NCDRC also directed the company to pay 10% of the amount invested as compensation and Rs1,000 as cost of litigation to the complainant.

The NCDRC judgement ratifies a financial consumer's right to seek compensation for a fraudulent default on part of a financial establishment.

Flyers set for higher payoffs from airlines

The Narendra Modi government has enhanced the compensation that airlines must pay passengers in case of lost baggage or suffering an injury while travelling with them.

If a person dies or suffers bodily injury in an air crash or some other aviation-related accident, the compensation payable to the family is now Rs 90 lakh, up from Rs 75 lakh earlier. In case of inordinate flight delays, the compensation could now be as high as Rs 3.5 lakh, up from Rs 3 lakh earlier. The maximum compensation for lost baggage has now been upped to about Rs 84,000 from Rs 74,000 earlier.

The enhanced compensation comes with the Cabinet on Tuesday amending the Air Carriage Act that deals with issues like damages to be paid for flight delays, loss of baggage and accidental death. Indian carriers will now pay as their international counterparts, in line with the 1999 Montreal Convention that governs airline liability and compensation.

These compensations are based on something called special drawing rights (SDR), with each SDR worth \$1.2.

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Flyers-set-for-higher-payoffs-from-airlines/articleshow/46615684.cms>

CAG's training session on the EIA process

CAG held a "Train the Trainers" program on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, on 27.03.2015, at Madras School of Economics (MSE), Chennai. The aim of the training programme was to educate representatives of local communities on the legal and regulatory aspects of EIA process, with specific focus on thermal power plants. The event had experts like Mr. L.V.Kuttiappan (Technical Consultant) and Prof. Swaminathan (Retd. IIT) who gave detailed presentations to explain the process. Dr. Sai Prasad, Deputy Chief Scientific Officer, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, was the Chief Guest at the event. Mr. T.K. Ramkumar, our legal consultant for the project, was also present.

Training Materials including Videos, Presentations and Thermal Watch Book (available in English, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu) are available in the Thermal Watch website.

Screening of "Katiyabaaz"



Chennai premiere of the award-winning documentary **Katiyabaaz- Powerless**, organized by Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), was held on 17th February, 2015. Participants at the screening included representatives of TNERC - Member Nagalswamy, Deputy Director Laxmi Devi, members of civil society organizations and other electricity experts, including Mr. Devasahayam, Retd. Chairperson Harayana Electricity Regulatory Commission (HERC), Prof. Hema (Madras School of Economics) and erstwhile officials of the Electricity Board.

