

Tackling Plastic Pollution in Islamabad capital on World Consumer Rights Day, 2021

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) 2021, TheNetwork for Consumer Protection has focused on the Capital city administration's experiences in making the city plastic-free. A webinar titled 'Tackling Plastic Pollution in Islamabad capital on World Consumer Rights Day' was held by TheNetwork on World Consumer Rights Day, 2021.

The key speakers addressing the session were; Mr. Rana Waqas Anwar, Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, and Mr. Babar Sahib Din, Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad (East), Zulfiqar Ali Jhammat, Deputy Director, Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR), Sadham Zarjahan, Coordinator International Youth Council.

Babar Sahib Din, ADC, Islamabad (East) talked about the regulations regarding no polythene bags. He said that Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration, Ministry of Climate Change representatives, and Environment Protection Agency are working together in order to implement the said regulations.

He also talked about the involvement of trade unions, chamber of commerce and manufacturers who were taken on board since the beginning. He added that no polythene bags awareness campaigns in Barakahu and other areas were run with the support of the above mentioned stakeholders. He added that the manufacture of cloth and jute bags were promoted by Ministry of Climate Change and fines were imposed as well.

He informed the audience that many trade centers and whole sale businesses were inspected and the violators were fined. Special teams were formed in ICT to identify the manufacturers of polythene bags as well. He added that tons of plastic bags were confiscated. He also answered the query of the participants regarding the penalty for the plastic bags.

Mr. Nadeem Iqbal CEO, TheNetwork also addressed the session and informed the audience about the World Consumer Rights Day and its implications for the consumers across the globe. He also informed the audience about the use of plastic in everyday lives and highlighted that it must be curtailed in order to avoid its long lasting hazards.

Rana Waqas Anwar, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Islamabad also joined the session and shared the overall situation of the ICT. He said that these regulations were made for the capital city and steps were being taken for the implementation. He added that plastic and its use is dangerous especially the single-use plastic.

He also added that the consumers must endure a little cost in order to save the future generations from getting overburdened by the bane of plastic pollution. He added that one of the most significant success story is that polythene manufacturing plants have been closed in the capital city. He said that urban centers are strictly following the guidelines. However, there are still gaps in the implementation of the rural or marginalized centers of the capital city. He also added that

the consumers know their rights and they must become responsible citizens so that we can get rid of this issue of plastic pollution.

Zulfiqar Ali Jhammat, Deputy Director, Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) also addressed the audience. He appreciated the efforts of TheNetwork and said that grass roots level needs to be catered to in this regard. He said that awareness regarding the consumer rights and that of plastic pollution must be given to the people of rural areas. He also added that in this era of COVID-19 online sessions can be held to increase the outreach to the consumers and inform them about their due rights and duties.

Another key speaker, Sadham Zarjahan talked about the importance of small actions with regard to the curtailment of plastic especially polythene bags. He added that international best practices can be adopted by the ICT administration like giving incentives to the consumers to cut plastic use in their daily lives. He also stressed that awareness and consumer response are the key elements for ensuring proper implementation on the said regulations.

This World Consumer Rights Day (15 March 2021), consumer organizations around the world are calling for global change to tackle plastic pollution. The 2021 World Consumer Rights Day campaign's theme is 7Rs: Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair and Replace. Consumers everywhere are taking action now on every one of the 7Rs and demanding that government and business should support them to do more.

World Consumer Rights Day, coordinated by Consumers International, the membership organization for consumer groups around the world, takes place every year to highlight the importance of consumer protection and empowerment. In 2021 the role of consumers and consumer advocacy is highlighted in tackling plastic pollution and it is being demonstrated that consumers everywhere demand change for environment and health.

As per Consumers International Organization data, around 40% of the plastic is produced for packaging and is discarded after single use that adds to the plastic pollution. Likewise, in the last 15 years the production of plastic skyrocketed than any other time. Around 8 million tons of plastic waste enters the oceans across the globe.

A report titled, 'Breaking the Plastic Wave', released by Pew Charitable Trusts & SYSTEMIQ in August 2020, concluded that the flow of plastic materials into the ocean will get tripled by 2040, until and unless correct policy measures are adopted and implemented in letter and spirit.

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