

## **Response to an invite for the World Consumer Rights Day.**

"Thank you for inviting me to attend the 'stretched limousine' seminar (from 2:45 to 6:30 pm) on Tuesday the 15<sup>th</sup> March. I regret I will not be able to join this session and my reasons are as follows:

- a. It is not a good idea to arrange programs that last for four hours. It must not be taken for granted that citizens have nothing else to do in life.
- b. While the program is packed with some very thoughtful items such as registration, guests to be seated, recitation, naat, speeches by this or that dignitary, presentation of mementos, distribution of certificates, national anthem, vote of thanks and high tea, there is hardly any space for the real issues that concern the purpose of the seminar.
- c. It is a sponsored and funded program to celebrate the 33 International Consumer Rights day. There is little to suggest in terms of thought, motivation or money that can be considered original or indigenous to this program.
- d. Conducting these programs in 5 star hotels (at the expense of donors / sponsors) is not a good idea. This ensure that the 99% consumers who suffer most from the violations of consumer rights - simply stay out.
- e. The invitation card suggests that a Sindh government minister has been specially chosen to be the Chief Guest – perhaps to blow away any semblance of reason or professionalism that may have been present in the program.
- f. If you carefully analyse the program, you might find that almost entire funding will go into hotel charges, high tea expenses, printing of cards, making of mementos and preparation of certificates. Could one work backwards to calculate the environmental burden and the carbon footprint gifted to the human race in this process. Also please consider the cost of fuel consumed and emissions generated by 200 or so guests who will drive down to grace the occasion.

Perhaps all this could be avoided. Information and booklets on the subject of consumer rights could be circulated on emails and a summary given in newspapers. Consumer complaint centres be set up. Government must be pushed to ensure compliance and take action against the industry / sellers when consumer rights are violated. These and many other steps could be undertaken by small groups of serious and knowledgeable citizens. 200 people can only be used as clapping machines for speeches that they little understand and are delivered by speakers who only read aloud what their secretaries have written for them."