

Both the trade leaders said that according to data from the consumer affairs ministry, during the April 2020-February 21 period, consumers logged 1,88,262 disputes or claims related to e-commerce transactions. Between April 2017 and February 2021, the grievance redressal system received 5,23,823 complaints related to e-commerce. These numbers are alarming because the e-commerce business in India is at a nascent stage and such a large number of complaints speaks to the casual and lethargic manner in which the Indian e-commerce landscape is operating.

Shri Bhartia & Shri Khandelwal further said that even in the Country, all other sectors of the economy like telecommunication, banking, stock market, insurance etc. do have a robust monitoring mechanism. However, the technology based e-commerce sector does not have a Regulatory Authority. There is no accountability of either the seller or the marketplace which has led to several recent instances where prohibited items like marijuana, poison, raw material used for making bombs are being facilitated through e-commerce portals have been caught red-handed. We have reason to believe that several other unlawful activities must have been conducted on e-commerce portals. Absence of any strong KYC norms for the sellers or no responsibility of the market place are the precise reasons.

Both the trade leaders said that it is a matter of common knowledge that in the absence of any regulatory framework, the fast growing e-commerce business in India has become hostage at the hands of foreign companies who are twisting the arms of both consumers and the traders by continuously flouting the rules & regulations and conducting mal-practices in utter disregard of established principles of trade & commerce whereas on the other hand rendering meaningless the "Digital India" campaign of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi by depriving crores of traders across the Country to provide goods & services through e-commerce by creating an uneven level playing field. It may be also admitted that with the increase of e-commerce business, there is a spurt in consumer complaints and having no regulatory Authority in place, the consumers are running from pillar to post but not getting relief in terms of their complaints.

Therefore, a Regulatory Authority on the pattern of TRAI to monitor and regulate the e-commerce business in India and the Ministry of Consumer Affairs be designated as the Regulatory Authority for e-commerce. This step will not only protect the interests of the Consumers but will also ensure a robust e-commerce landscape in India-said Shri Bhartia & Shri Khandelwal.