

The role of the Internal Committee appointed to resolve consumer complaints

The Internal Committee for Resolution of Consumer Complaints (ICRCC) was appointed by the Commission under section 9 of the Sri Lanka Telecommunications Act No:25 of 1991 as amended by Act No:27 of 1996.

Provisions in section 9 of the Act are as follows:-

(1) Where a subscriber to a telecommunication service or a member of the public makes a complaint to the Commission in relation to the telecommunication service provided by an operator, the Commission may make such investigation as it may deem necessary and shall cause such remedial measures to be taken as the circumstances of the case may require.

(2) In the course of any investigation under subsection (1), the Commission may direct such operator to take such steps as it appears to it to be necessary for the rectification of any cause or matter which gave rise to the complaint, and direct that financial redress be provided where appropriate.

(3) Every complaint made under subsection (1) shall be in writing and shall set out clearly the reasons therefore.

At the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission the Consumer Relations Unit is responsible for handling consumer complaints and the complaints which cannot be solved by the Consumer Relations Unit are submitted to the Committee for final resolution. Most of the complaints are related to telephone bills. The Committee has resolved many disputes to the utmost satisfaction of the consumers and the public. The inquiries are conducted in an absolutely transparent manner and parties to the disputes are invited for the hearing. ALL parties are given equal opportunities to speak and they do have the right to ask questions from each other. The minutes are recorded and sent to the parties and the recommendations of the Committee are submitted to the Commission for a final decision. The process requires principles of natural justice to be followed. The Committee has at all times insisted that all officers whose presence is required for the inquiry should be present with all the necessary information and documents relating to the dispute.

Many important decisions have been taken by the Committee so far. Recently the Committee inquired into complaints made by several consumers on excessive bills for International Direct Dialing facility (IDD) provided by Sri Lanka Telecom. It was brought to the notice of the Committee that this occurred due to Internet Dumping/Modem Hijacking. The Committee made several recommendations to the Commission in this regard. The Committee also noted that satisfactory measures have been taken by Sri Lanka Telecom in the interest of their customers.

At the request of the Chairperson of the Committee Sri Lanka Telecom provided three telephone numbers toll free to Sri Lanka Telecom customers. This is a great benefit to the consumers as they will not be required to pay for the calls taken by them to follow up on a written complaint made by them to the Commission.

The telephone numbers are as follows : -

Toll Free Numbers

SLT	Lanka bell	Suntel
011-2662222	011-5376159	011-4514067
011-2662215		
011-2662216		

Consumers could complain to us on various issues relating to the services provided by all operators.

We consider a complaint as a gift .We also appreciate the co-operation extended by the operators to resolve the disputes.

The Consumers could make complaints to the Commission on many issues such as for example:-

Billing.

Directory information services/Inquiries.

Quality of service.

Services for people with disabilities.

Functioning of emergency call numbers.

Public pay phones.

Premium Rate Services regarding consumer protection.

New telephone installations . for example:-delays

The Internal Committee for Resolution for Consumer Complaints is constituted as follows :-

Mrs. P.R.Amarasiri-Director Legal Affairs-Chairperson

Mrs. R.Gooneratna-Asst Director Legal-Member

Mr. L.Ganeshamoorthy-Asst Director-Vendor licensing &Technical Standards-Member

Mr. A.Hapuarachchi-Asst Director-Revenue-Member

Mrs. M.Pathirana-Asst Director Operator Analysis-Member