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28 March 2015

Feature

Be a conscious consumer!

As the long Easter weekend nears, our towns and cities are once again abuzz with loud music, colourful poster advertisements, grand sale stickers, discounts, give-aways, promotions and fresh deals, building on the momentum already set by, 'Mad March' crazy sale.

Enthusiasm fills the air – as consumers look forward to the discounts. While for traders, it is that time when they can make quick money as well as clear their old stock, which otherwise may have been difficult to sell on a normal business day.

The Council in the past has come across cases where some traders increased the price of certain items which were tagged as sale item or had placed items in the sale corner that were actually being sold at normal price. There have been cases where some traders have not hesitated to sell faulty or counterfeit goods.

This is one of the key reasons why the Council has constantly reminded consumers to be cautious when shopping during a sale.

For those who wish to make the most of their money and want to buy quality products at attractive prices, comparison shopping is the best strategy.

It can be quite challenging to find the best quality product at the lowest possible price. Comparison shopping helps one find the product that one desires to buy, at a better price. One can browse several stores for the same item and then buy the item from the store that offers the most competitive rate.

But this is not the only benefit of comparison shopping. It gives buyers the best value for the money spent. By comparing the product features, specifications, and technologies, one can make the right buying decision besides gaining knowledge on the product.

It's always wise to know your rights if a problem does arise with the item you have purchased during the Easter sale. Consumers are protected under Sales of Goods Act which states that the goods purchased must fit the description, must be of satisfactory quality and must be fit for purpose. It does not matter whether a consumer paid sale or discounted price or normal price. Traders cannot say that discount price was offered because the product was faulty. Consumers are entitled to get money back from the trader if the defects were not shown before selling. However, if a consumer changes his or her mind then it's up to an individual

trader whether he/she wants to take back the item and give a replacement item for the same amount or give a credit note or make a cash refund.

The Council has come across cases where retailers give a run around to consumers when they seek redress for faulty products. Retailers mislead consumers by telling them to get a refund from the manufacturer. If the goods are not up to scratch then it is the retailer, not the manufacturer, who should give you a refund or replacement or repair the item concerned.

Consumer rights come with responsibilities. The word 'responsibility' encompasses the following:

- Budget and spend wisely;
- Do comparison shopping;
- Exercise your right to seek information on your purchase;
- Examine products carefully before purchasing it;
- Don't allow yourself to be enticed with free gifts, zero deposits or interest holiday, especially when purchasing expensive items or items on hire purchase;
- Collect receipts for every purchase or service rendered. Without a receipt consumer redress becomes difficult and sometimes impossible.
- Be aware of your rights when you shop for a product or service.

Make most of the sale but be a responsible shopper!