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Consumer Council of Fiji



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PRESS RELEASE

### Council Urges Wise Spending During Diwali Season

As the Diwali season approaches, consumers are urged to make informed purchasing decisions and stay aware of their consumer rights. While the festival of lights brings excitement and the spirit of giving, it's crucial for consumers to protect their hard-earned money and ensure that their spending is both wise and meaningful.

Last year, the Consumer Council of Fiji received a total of 163 complaints valued at just over \$15,000 during the Diwali season, highlighting various consumer grievances. These complaints included issues such as the price of items not being displayed, discrepancies between displayed prices and what was charged at the cashier, and the sale of expired food products. Consumers also reported instances of contaminated food products, with some being infested with weevils.

During the Diwali season, the Council has also noted one of the most prevalent concerns is price gouging, where products in high demand are subject to unjustified price increases. A recent example of this was observed a few weeks ago, when the prices of ghee surged significantly. Complaints about overcharging on regulated basic food items is also a recurring issue.

Consumers should also be aware of the common complaints regarding hair and makeup such as shoddy work on hair and beauty treatments. Online shopping has also posed challenges in the past, with several consumers reporting non-delivery of clothing and other items after payment.

“Diwali is a time of joy and celebration, but it is crucial for consumers to remain vigilant in their shopping practices. We urge everyone to be careful, avoid making rushed purchases, and thoroughly check their items before completing a transaction. Keeping your receipts is also essential, as it helps in seeking redress if there are any issues after purchasing. Being informed about potential issues—such as discrepancies at the cashier, overcharging on regulated items, and the challenges of online shopping—will help ensure a more enjoyable and stress-free festive season,” says Council CEO Seema Shandil.

“The risks extend to online shopping as well, where scams can proliferate during the festive season. Consumers should exercise caution when making purchases online, verifying the credibility of websites and the authenticity of products before completing transactions.

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Furthermore, the sale of substandard or expired products can pose serious health risks, particularly in food items that are in high demand during this time,” adds Ms Shandil.

In light of these concerns, the Consumer Council will continue to conduct thorough surveillance of supermarkets and retailers throughout the Diwali season. “Our team will be monitoring pricing, promotional activities, and product quality to ensure that businesses comply with fair trading standards. We are committed to holding retailers accountable for their practices,” Shandil explains. “If consumers encounter any unfair trading practices or feel misled, we urge them to report these issues to us.”

As consumers prepare to celebrate this festive occasion, it is essential to prioritize financial well-being while enjoying the festivities. For additional information or to report any consumer issues, please reach out to the Consumer Council of Fiji at the Toll-Free National Consumer Helpline 155 or via [complaints@consumersfiji.org](mailto:complaints@consumersfiji.org).

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