

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1035

TO BE ANSWERED ON 28.07.2023

FAKE REVIEWS ON E-COMMERCE WEBSITES

1035. SHRI AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has collected any data to assess the number of fake reviews on e-commerce websites;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) if not, whether Government plans on doing so;
- (d) whether it is a fact that Government is planning to create a framework to curb fake reviews; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE, CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) to (c): The National Consumer Helpline (NCH), as a pre-litigation mechanism, receives grievances from consumers through telephone (short code 1915), web portal, letters, SMS, emails etc. and Mobile App. These grievances are taken up with the concerned entities for resolution. During the last six months (January, 2023 to June, 2023), a total of 19 consumer grievances relating to fake reviews have been received in NCH.

(d) and (e): The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has notified framework on 'Online Consumer Reviews - Principles and Requirements for their Collection, Moderation and Publication' on 23.11.2022 for safeguarding and protecting consumer interest from fake and deceptive reviews in e-commerce. The standards are voluntary and are applicable to every online platform which publishes consumer reviews. The guiding principles of the standard are integrity, accuracy, privacy, security, transparency, accessibility and responsiveness. BIS has also published a conformity assessment scheme to assess the compliance of the standard.

The standard also provides for methods for verification of review author through email address, identification by telephone call or SMS, confirming registration by clicking on a link, using captcha system etc. to check traceability and genuineness of the review author.

Besides above, for the purpose of preventing unfair trade practices in e-commerce, the Central Government has notified the Consumer Protection (e-commerce) Rules, 2020. In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 18 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has notified Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022 on 9th June 2022, with the objective to curb misleading advertisements and protect the consumers, who may be exploited or affected by such advertisements.
