

Government of India
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Department of Consumer Affairs

RAJYA SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO. *268

TO BE ANSWERED ON 25.03.2025

RISE IN E-COMMERCE COMPLAINTS

*268. SHRI GOLLA BABURAO:

Will the MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that there is significant rise in e-Commerce complaints in the country; and
- (b) if so, the details of the complaints lodged and solved in the last 2 years?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI)

(a) & (b) : A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) & (b) OF RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.*268 FOR 25.03.2025 REGARDING RISE IN E-COMMERCE COMPLAINTS ASKED BY SHRI GOLLA BABURAO.

(a) and (b): Department of Consumer Affairs is continuously working for consumer protection and empowerment of consumers by enactment of progressive legislations. With a view to modernize the framework governing the consumer protection in the new era of globalization, technologies, e-commerce markets etc. Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was repealed and Consumer Protection Act, 2019 was enacted.

Salient features of the new Consumer Protection Act, 2019 are establishment of a Central Consumer Protection Authority(CCPA); simplification of the adjudication process in the Consumer Commissions such as enhancing pecuniary jurisdiction of the Consumer Commissions, online filing of complaint from the Consumer Commission having jurisdiction over the place of work/residence of the consumer irrespective of the place of transaction, videoconferencing for hearing, deemed admissibility of complaints if admissibility is not decided within 21 days of filing; provision of product liability; penal provisions for manufacture/sale of adulterated products/spurious goods; provision for making rules for prevention of unfair trade practice in e-commerce and direct selling.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 provides for a three tier quasi-judicial machinery at District, State and Central levels commonly known as “Consumer Commissions” for protection of the rights of consumers and to provide simple and speedy redressal of consumer disputes including those related with unfair trade practices. The Consumer Commissions are empowered to give relief of a specific nature and award compensation to consumers, wherever appropriate.

To safeguard the interests of consumers from unfair trade practices in e-commerce, the Department of Consumer Affairs has notified the Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020 under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. These rules, inter-alia, outline the responsibilities of e-commerce entities and specify the liabilities of marketplace and inventory e-commerce entities, including provisions for consumer grievance redressal.

Under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), an executive agency, came into existence on 24.07.2020. It is designed to intervene, to prevent consumer detriment arising from unfair trade practices and to initiate class action(s), including the enforcement of recalls, refunds and return of products. Its core mandate is to prevent and regulate false or misleading advertisements which are prejudicial to the public interest.

The CCPA has also notified the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022 on 9th June, 2022. These guidelines inter-alia provide for; (a) conditions for an advertisement to be non-misleading and valid; (b) certain stipulations in respect of bait advertisements and free claim advertisements; and, (c) duties of manufacturer, service provider, advertiser and advertising agency. These guidelines states that due diligence is required for endorsement of advertisements such that any endorsement in an advertisement must reflect the genuine, reasonably current opinion of the individual, group or organisation making such representation and must be based on adequate information about, or experience with, the identified goods, product or service and must not otherwise be deceptive.

The Department of Consumer Affairs, in consultation with all the stakeholders, has finalized a “safety Pledge” which is a voluntary public commitment of e-Commerce platforms to ensure the safety of goods sold online and respect the consumer rights. Aligned with global best practices, this initiative strengthens consumer protection in the e-Commerce. On the National Consumer Day 2024, 13 major e-Commerce companies including Reliance Retail group, Tata sons group, Zomato, Ola, Swiggy etc. signed the Safety Pledge for ensuring consumer safety. The support and agreement of major e-Commerce companies to abide by the safety pledge will go a long way in ensuring protection of consumer rights.

The CCPA, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 18 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, has issued “Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023” on 30th November, 2023 for prevention and regulation of dark patterns listing 13 specified dark patterns identified in e-Commerce sector. These dark patterns include false urgency, Basket Sneaking, Confirm shaming, forced action, Subscription trap, Interface Interference, Bait and switch, Drip Pricing, Disguised Advertisements, Nagging, Trick Wording, Saas Billing and Rogue Malwares.

Action has already been taken by the CCPA against various entities including e-commerce platforms for affecting consumers, as a class, for violation of consumer rights, false and misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices as defined under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. Action has also been taken against the sale of domestic pressure cookers that do not meet compulsory BIS standards on e-commerce platforms. Additionally, as per CCPA's directions, travel companies have refunded Rs. 1,454 Crores as of 20.03.2024 to consumers for cancelled flights due to the Covid-19 lockdown. CCPA has also mandated that these companies update their websites with clear instructions and status updates on refund claims related to cancelled tickets. Further, 13,118 listings of car seat belt alarm stopper clips have been delisted from major e-commerce platforms based on the Orders passed by CCPA to delist all such products which violates consumer rights and are unfair trade practice under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 as the sale or marketing of said product compromise with the life and safety of consumer by stopping alarm beep when not wearing seat belts.

E-commerce websites are mandated to ensure proper disclosure of essential information under the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011. This includes the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, or importer, along with the name of the country of origin, to maintain transparency for consumers. Additionally, the common or generic name of the commodity, its net quantity and MRP must be clearly displayed. For products with a limited shelf life, the ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ date, month, and year must be mentioned to ensure consumer safety. These mandatory declarations promote fair trade practices, prevent misleading information, and strengthen consumer protection in the digital marketplace.

The Department of Consumer Affairs is actively enforcing the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 to ensure fair trade practices and protect consumer rights. A total of 821 cases have been booked for violations under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 and the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011. As per the provisions of the Act and Rules cases are compounded by paying the compounding fees to the Government.

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.

The National Consumer Helpline (NCH) administered by the Department of Consumer Affairs has emerged as a single point of access to consumers across the country for their grievance redressal at a pre-litigation stage. Consumers can register their grievances from all over the country in 17 languages including Hindi, English, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Nepali, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Maithili, Santhali, Bengali, Odia, Assamese and Manipuri through a toll-free number 1915. These grievances can be registered on Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism (INGRAM), an omni-channel IT enabled central portal, through various channels- WhatsApp (8800001915), SMS (8800001915), email (nch-ca@gov.in), the NCH app, the web portal (consumerhelpline.gov.in) and the Umang app, as per their convenience. 1049 companies, who have voluntarily partnered with NCH, as part of the ‘Convergence’ programme directly respond to these grievances according to their redressal process and revert by providing a feedback to the complainant on the portal. Complaints against those companies, who have not partnered with National Consumer Helpline, are forwarded to the company for redressal.

The technological transformation of the NCH has significantly boosted its call-handling capacity. The number of calls received by NCH has grown more than tenfold, from 12,553 in December 2015 to 1,55,138 in December 2024. Similarly, the average number of complaints registered per month has increased from 37,062 in 2017 to 1,11,951 in 2024. Additionally, grievance registration via WhatsApp has gained momentum, with the percentage of complaints filed through the platform increasing from 3% in March 2023 to 18% in December 2024, demonstrating a growing preference for digital communication channels.

This exponential growth reflects the rising confidence of consumers in the helpline.

The number of grievances received and disposed of from the e-Commerce sector in the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) of the Department of Consumer Affairs is mentioned below:

S. No.	Year	No. of grievances received in e-Commerce Sector	No. of grievances disposed in e-Commerce Sector	% Contribution of grievances in e-Commerce Sector
1	2022	365370	365370	38.3%
2	2023	446133	446133	38.2%
3	2024	440185	440185	32.8%
