

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

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 197
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.02.2025

**DIFFERENTIAL PRICING OF SAME PRODUCTS OR SERVICES ON
ANDROID AND IOS PLATFORMS**

197. SHRI KARTIKEYA SHARMA

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

- (a) the specific instances the Ministry has observed regarding the practice of charging different prices for the same products or services on Android and iOS mobile platforms;
- (b) whether the Ministry is investigating the underlying algorithms, data-driven pricing strategies, and potential biases that may be leading to such discriminatory pricing practices by e-commerce companies and online retailers across different digital ecosystems; and
- (c) the measures undertaken by the Ministry to enhance transparency in the pricing practices of online businesses, including the mandatory disclosure of their algorithms and data-driven personalization models?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE, CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI B.L VERMA)

(a) to (c) : 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 Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was repealed and Consumer Protection Act, 2019 was enacted.

To safeguard consumers from unfair trade practices in e-commerce, the Department of Consumer Affairs has also 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 customer grievance redressal.

In terms of the provisions of these rules, no e-commerce entity shall

Manipulate the price of the goods or services offered on its platform in such a manner as to gain unreasonable profit by imposing on consumers any unjustified price having regard to the prevailing market conditions, the essential nature of the good or service, any extraordinary circumstances under which the good or service is offered, and any other relevant consideration in determining whether the price charged is justified.

Discriminate between the consumers of the same class or make any arbitrary classification of consumers affecting their rights under the Act.

These rules also provide that no e-commerce entity shall adopt any unfair trade practice, whether in the course of business on its platform or otherwise.

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.

In order to strengthen consumer protection, the CCPA issued the “Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023” on 30th November 2023. These guidelines address and regulate 13 specific dark patterns identified in the e-commerce sector, aiming to prevent deceptive practices that mislead consumers.

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) introduced the framework on ‘Online Consumer Reviews — Principles and Requirements for their Collection, Moderation, and Publication’ on 23rd November 2022. This framework safeguards consumer interests by addressing fake and deceptive reviews in e-commerce. While the standards are voluntary, they apply to all online platforms that publish consumer reviews and are guided by principles such as integrity, accuracy, privacy, security, transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness.
