

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

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 194
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.07.2025

DARK PATTERNS IN E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS

194. SHRI PRAMOD TIWARI

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

- (a) whether Government has recognized a number of dark patterns in e-commerce platforms;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether dark patterns erode consumer trust, distort fair market dynamics and pose a serious threat to the integrity of digital commerce; and
- (d) if so, the effective solutions taken/proposed to be taken to safeguard consumer rights and promote fair trade practices?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d) Dark patterns involve using design and choice architecture to deceive, coerce, or influence consumers into making choices that are not in their best interest. Dark patterns encompass a wide range of manipulative practices such as drip pricing, disguised advertisement, bait and switch, false urgency etc. Such practices fall under the category of “unfair trade practices” as defined in the Sub-section 47 under Section 2 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Central Consumer Protection Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 18 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, 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.

In furtherance, to safeguard consumer rights and promote fair trade practices, Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India convened a meeting on 28th May, 2025 under the chairmanship of Hon’ble Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and New and Renewable Energy with representatives from major e-commerce companies, industry associations, Voluntary Consumer Organizations and National Law Universities for a focused dialogue on eliminating deceptive online practices.

As an outcome of the said meeting, an “Advisory in terms of Consumer Protection Act,2019 on Self-Audit by E-Commerce Platforms for detecting the Dark Patterns on their platforms to create a fair, ethical and consumer centric digital ecosystem”, was issued by Central Consumer Protection Authority on 5th June,2025 .

All E-Commerce platforms have been advised through the said Advisory to take necessary steps to ensure that their platforms do not engage in such deceptive and unfair trade practice which are in the nature of Dark Patterns. Further, all E-Commerce platforms have been advised to conduct **self-audits** to identify dark patterns, **within three months of the issue of the advisory** and take necessary steps to ensure that their platforms are free from such dark patterns. Based on the self-audit reports, the E-Commerce platforms should also give self-declarations that their platform is not indulging in any dark patterns in order to ensure fair digital ecosystem along with building trust between consumers and e-commerce platforms.

A Joint Working Group, comprising representatives from Ministries, National Law Universities and Voluntary Consumer Organizations, has been constituted vide Office Memorandum dated 5th June,2025 for identifying the dark patterns and stakeholders to work together in creating a transparent, ethical and user-centric online environment .
