

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

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2932
TO BE ANSWERED ON 19.08.2025

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION IN E-COMMERCE

2932. DR. K. LAXMAN

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

- (a) whether Government is aware of the rampant violation of consumer rights by the e-commerce entities;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken by Government to protect the interest of consumers in the e-commerce sector; and
- (d) the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d) : 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in the new era of globalization, technologies, e-commerce markets etc., the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was repealed and Consumer Protection Act, 2019 was enacted.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 National level 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.

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. 1110 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.

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.

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

- a) 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.
- b) 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.

A "Safety Pledge" has been finalized, in consultation with all the stakeholders, 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.

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, 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. Further, 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 the CCPA on 5th June, 2025.

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.

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 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 violate consumer rights and are unfair trade practice under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 as the sale or marketing of said product compromises with the life and safety of consumer by stopping alarm beep when not wearing seat belts. Also, subsequent to CCPA's intervention, an e-commerce platform discontinued the practice of automatically adding Rs. 1 per ticket towards charity contribution in the ticket (a form of Basket Sneaking dark pattern), in the form of pre-tick format (a form of forced consent dark pattern). An airline modified the manner in which it used to offer insurance at the time of purchase of tickets (a form of confirm shaming dark pattern).

Further to strengthen consumer protection, the CCPA enacted the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Greenwashing and Misleading Environmental Claims, 2024 (effective 15th October 2024), mandating transparency in environmental claims and the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements in the Coaching Sector, 2024 (effective 13th November 2024), addressing false claims, exaggerated success rates and unfair practices in coaching institutes.

Also, 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.
