

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

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1003
TO BE ANSWERED ON 28.07.2026

MISLEADING CLAIMS OF ONLINE ASTROLOGY PLATFORMS

1003. MS. SWATI MALIWAL

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

- (a) whether Government has assessed the proliferation of online astrology and occult-service platforms making unverifiable claims for consideration and the findings thereof;
- (b) whether such practices fall within the ambit of misleading advertisements or unfair trade practices under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and whether any guidance has been issued in this regard;
- (c) whether Government maintains a mechanism for receiving and acting upon consumer complaints relating to such platforms and the details thereof; and
- (d) the steps taken or proposed to strengthen consumer safeguards, transparency and regulatory oversight in respect of such platforms?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d) : The Department of Consumer Affairs has strengthened the consumer protection framework through the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, to effectively address emerging challenges arising from globalization, technological advancements and e-commerce.

Salient features of the 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.

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 consumer grievance redressal.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 defines unfair trade practice as trade practice which, for the purpose of promoting the sale, use or supply of any goods or for the provision of any service, adopts any unfair method or unfair or deceptive practice.

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. According to these Guidelines endorser, social media endorser/virtual endorsers includes an individual or a group or an institution making endorsement of any goods, product or service in an advertisement whose opinion, belief, finding or experience being the message which such advertisement appears to reflect. These Guidelines state 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 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. 1,853 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 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.
