

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

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1791
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.08.2026

CONSUMER PROTECTION AND E-COMMERCE REGULATION

1791. SHRI SADANAND MHALU SHET TANAVADE:
SHRI UJJWAL DEORAO NIKAM:

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

- (a) the major initiatives undertaken during the last one year to strengthen consumer protection in the digital marketplace, including regulation of e-commerce platforms;
- (b) the measures taken to curb unfair trade practices, misleading advertisements, fake reviews and Dark Patterns affecting consumers;
- (c) the progress made in strengthening consumer grievance redressal mechanisms through digital platforms such as the National Consumer Helpline and e-Daakhil; and
- (d) the impact of these initiatives on enhancing consumer awareness, transparency and protection of consumer rights?

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.

The Department of Consumer Affairs notified the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 on 23rd July, 2020 under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, to prevent unfair trade practices and protect consumers in the e-commerce sector. As per the provisions of these rules, every e-commerce entity shall endeavor to become the partner in the convergence process of the National Consumer Helpline and must appoint a grievance officer and prominently display the officer's name, designation, and contact details on its platform. The grievance officer shall acknowledge any consumer complaint within forty-eight hours and redress it within one month from the date of receipt. Consent of a consumer can be recorded only through explicit and affirmative action and not through pre-ticked checkboxes or automatic means. No e-commerce entity shall manipulate the price of goods or services to gain unreasonable profit or impose unjustified prices, nor shall it discriminate between consumers of the same class or make arbitrary classifications that affect consumer rights under the Act.

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has notified the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022; Guidelines on hotels and restaurants shall not levy service charge; Guidelines on Prevention of Dark Pattern, 2023; Guidelines on Prevention and Regulation of Greenwashing, 2024; Guidelines on Prevention and Regulation of Misleading Advertisement in Coaching Sector, 2024 and Guidelines on Prevention and Regulation of Illegal Listing and Sale of Radio Equipment including Walkie Talkies on E-Commerce Platforms, 2025.

The CCPA, 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, 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 Question, Saas Billing and Rogue Malwares.

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 CCPA 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 practices 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. 31 e-commerce platforms have voluntarily submitted their self-declaration letters confirming compliance with the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023.

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.

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 omnichannel 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.

The National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has successfully facilitated refunds amounting to over ₹91 crore (including over ₹63 Crore with regard to the grievances pertaining to e-commerce sector) to consumers between 25th April 2025 and 30th June 2026 by effectively addressing over 1,47,000 consumer grievances related to refund claims at the pre-litigation stage.

To modernize and digitally transform consumer dispute filing and management processes, the Department of Consumer Affairs launched the e-Jagriti portal on 1st January, 2025. The portal leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) and incorporates features such as faceless onboarding and role-based dashboards. It unifies existing applications (OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS, CONFONET) into a single, scalable platform, allowing users to file complaints seamlessly from anywhere with multilingual support. The portal is designed to provide a convenient, transparent and efficient means for consumers to seek redressal by enabling online complaint filing, digital submission of documents, online payment of fees and also supports virtual courtrooms, enabling the hearing of cases remotely and ensuring faster disposal while reducing dependency on physical infrastructure.

The Government is undertaking extensive consumer awareness initiatives under the flagship "Jago Grahak Jago" campaign to educate consumers about their rights and protect them from fraud, deceptive marketing practices and substandard products. Consumer awareness messages are disseminated through multimedia platforms, including All India Radio, NFDC, CBC, IRCTC, MyGov and official social media handles. The Department also conducts IVRS and SMS campaigns in English, Hindi and nine regional languages, with focused outreach in North-Eastern States and SC/ST-dominated areas, besides providing grant-in-aids to States/UTs for localized awareness programmes. Further, the Department regularly disseminates information through digital creatives, audio-visual content and public awareness campaigns on consumer rights, safe consumer practices, hallmarking, ISI certification, packaged commodities, misleading advertisements and grievance redressal mechanisms. Grassroots awareness is being strengthened through weekly capacity-building sessions with Panchayati Raj Institutions across all States/UTs, while participation in public events, cinema campaigns, AIR broadcasts and collaboration with MyGov has further expanded outreach, enabling consumers to make informed choices and seek timely redressal of grievances.
