

Government of India
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Department of Consumer Affairs
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 5505
TO BE ANSWERED ON 05.04.2023

FAKE REVIEWS ABOUT HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

5505. DR. SUBHASH RAMRAO BHAMRE: SHRI KULDEEP RAI SHARMA: DR. DNV SENTHILKUMAR S.: SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: SHRI SUNIL DATTATRAY TATKARE: DR. AMOL RAMSING KOLHE:

Will the Minister of **CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION** उपभोक्ता मामले, खाद्य और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री be pleased to state:

- (a) whether e-commerce companies get fake reviews written about online shopping, hotel booking and food and service in restaurants to influence the choice of customers;
- (b) if so, whether the Government has issued new guidelines to protect people from misleading advertisements;
- (c) if so, the details thereof along with the benefits likely to be accrued to the customers;
- (d) whether the Central Consumer Protection Authority has also taken any steps to stop such unfair trade practices by e-Commerce companies;
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the action proposed to be taken against the guilty persons and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (f) whether the Government proposes to make it mandatory for people writing reviews to submit their identity details such as invoice and photos on e-commerce platforms for cross verification through KYC method and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

उपभोक्ता मामले, खाद्य और सार्वजनिक वितरण राज्य मंत्री
(श्री अश्विनी कुमार चौबे)

THE MINISTER OF STATE
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) to (f) : 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. BIS has also published a conformity assessment scheme to assess the compliance of the standard.

The standard also provides for methods for verification of review author through email address, identification by telephone call or SMS, confirming registration by clicking on a link, using captcha system etc. to check traceability and genuineness of the review author.

For the purpose of preventing unfair trade practices in e-commerce, the Central Government has notified the Consumer Protection (e-commerce) Rules, 2020. In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 18 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has notified Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022 on 9th June 2022, with the objective to curb misleading advertisements and protect the consumers, who may be exploited or affected by such advertisements.

CCPA has further issued advisories and safety notices to e-commerce platforms and consumers to safeguard consumer rights. The first advisory concerns the sale of Ayurvedic, Siddha and Unani drugs containing ingredients listed in Schedule E(1) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 and requires a valid prescription from a registered Ayurveda, Siddha or Unani practitioner. The second advisory concerns the sale of wireless jammers, which is illegal without proper authorization/license under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 or Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act (IWTA) 1933, unless exempted by rules.

The two safety notices caution consumers against buying goods that do not hold valid ISI Mark and violate compulsory BIS standards, such as Helmets, Pressure Cookers and Cooking gas cylinders and other household goods including electric immersion water heaters, sewing machines, microwave ovens, domestic gas stoves with LPG etc.
