

**Government of India
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Department of Consumer Affairs
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1119 (OIH)
TO BE ANSWERED ON 26.07.2023**

HARASSMENT IN ONLINE GOODS AND SERVICE

1119. SHRI SUDARSHAN BHAGAT:
(OIH)

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

- (a) whether the cases of harassment of consumers regarding sale of online goods and service provision through social media are on the rise;
- (b) if so, the State-wise details during the last five years; and
- (c) if not, the steps taken by the Government to curb this?

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 (c): The Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020, which have been notified under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, are aimed at protecting consumers from unfair trade practices in e-commerce. They require all e-commerce entities to establish consumer grievance redressal mechanism, appoint a grievance officer for consumer grievance redressal and display the name, contact details, and designation of such officers on their platform. The grievance officer is required to acknowledge the receipt of any consumer complaint within forty-eight hours and to redress the complaint within one month from the date of receipt of the complaint.

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has been established under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 to regulate matters relating to consumer rights violations, unfair trade practices, and false or misleading advertisements that harm the public and consumer interests.

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.

The Department of Consumer Affairs takes a proactive approach in tackling the challenges presented by the ever-evolving online sector. Recently, the Department has noticed emergence of unfair trade practices known as “dark patterns” which involve using design and choice architecture to deceive, coerce, or influence consumers into making choices that are not in their best interest.

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) conducted an interactive consultation in Mumbai on June 13, 2023 with various stakeholders including e-commerce companies, industry associations etc.

In line with these efforts, the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, has urged the e-commerce companies, industry associations to refrain from indulging in any design or pattern in the online interfaces of their platform that may deceive or manipulate consumer choices and fall into the category of dark patterns.
