

Government of India
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Department of Consumer Affairs

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1680
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.07.2026

CONSUMER PROTECTION AND E-COMMERCE REGULATION

1680. SMT. RACHNA BANERJEE:
SHRI PRADEEP KUMAR SINGH:
SHRI TEJASVI SURYA:
DR. VINOD KUMAR BIND:
SHRI VIJAY KUMAR DUBEY:
SHRI RAJKUMAR CHAHAR:
SHRI PRATAP CHANDRA SARANGI:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken cognizance of the increasing number of complaints related to misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices on e-commerce and social media platforms and if so, the details thereof during the last three years and the current year, Statewise;
- (b) the details of the major initiatives undertaken by the Government during the last one year to strengthen consumer protection in the digital marketplace including regulation of e-commerce platforms;
- (c) the details of the measures taken by the Government to curb unfair trade practices, misleading advertisements, fake reviews and dark patterns affecting consumers;
- (d) the details of the progress made in strengthening consumer grievance redressal mechanisms through digital platforms such as the National Consumer Helpline and e-Daakhil; and
- (e) 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 (e) : The year-wise and State/UT-wise details of the total number of complaints including complaints related to misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices received and disposed of by the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) in e-commerce sector during the last three years and the current year are given at **Annexure-I**.

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 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.

Central Consumer Protection Authority, 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 Wording, Saas Billing and Rogue Malwares.

Subsequent to the Guidelines for the Prevention Dark Pattern 2023, CCPA has taken action against E-commerce platforms engaging in dark patterns and imposed a penalty to the tune of Rs. 20 Lakh. List of action taken is placed as **Annexure-II**.

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 Central Consumer Protection Authority 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 leading 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 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.

Also, as per Section 38 (7) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, every complaint shall be disposed of as expeditiously as possible and endeavour shall be made to decide the complaint within a period of three months from the date of receipt of notice by opposite party where the complaint does not require analysis or testing of commodities and within five months, if it requires analysis or testing of commodities.

To serve the interest of speedy justice to the end consumers, Consumer Protection Act states that no adjournment shall ordinarily be granted by the consumer commissions unless sufficient cause is shown and the reasons for grant of adjournment have been recorded in writing by the Commission.

The Central Authority i.e. Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has been established under Section 10 (1) of Consumer Protection Act, 2019 to regulate matters relating to violation of rights of consumers, unfair trade practices and false or misleading advertisements which are prejudicial to the interests of public and consumers and to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class.

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. These features address bottlenecks like geographical barriers, scheduling conflicts and manual interventions.

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) and State Commissions in Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand achieved disposal rates above 100% after July, 2025. In 2025, 1,62,474 cases were filed and 1,50,197 disposed of, that outperformed the disposal rate of the year 2024. Also, 1,021 Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) registered their complaints using e-Jagriti portal from abroad till 17th July, 2026.

e-Jagriti has reduced reliance on physical proceedings and has accelerated justice delivery. Further, VC equipment for conducting hearing through video conferencing mode has already been installed and made functional at 10 benches of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) and 35 benches of State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (SCDRCs). e-Jagriti transformed consumer justice delivery - earning it the Silver Award under Category-I at the National Awards for e-Governance 2026 amid 341 nominations.

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-aid 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.

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (e) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1680 FOR ANSWER ON 29.07.2026 REGARDING “CONSUMER PROTECTION AND E-COMMERCE REGULATION”.

Year-wise and State/UT-wise details of the total number of complaints including complaints related to misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices received and disposed of by the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) in e-commerce sector during the last three years and the current year.

S. No.	State/UT	2023		2024		2025		2026 (till 31.03.2026)	
		Received	Disposed	Received	Disposed	Received	Disposed	Received	Disposed
1.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	418	418	296	296	219	219	84	84
2.	Andhra Pradesh	16356	16356	16868	16868	14305	14305	4751	4751
3.	Arunachal Pradesh	2155	2155	11962	11962	3700	3700	1698	1698
4.	Assam	6000	6000	6959	6959	6039	6039	2014	2014
5.	Bihar	25706	25706	22742	22742	25995	25995	7074	7074
6.	Chandigarh	1346	1346	1228	1228	1421	1421	497	497
7.	Chhattisgarh	4492	4492	4457	4457	4917	4917	1545	1545
8.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman And Diu	247	247	223	223	271	271	66	66
9.	Delhi	33170	33170	32415	32415	37528	37528	10932	10932
10.	Goa	1150	1150	1059	1059	1244	1244	426	426
11.	Gujarat	20646	20646	21216	21216	27480	27480	8779	8779
12.	Haryana	19890	19890	18647	18647	23136	23136	6702	6702
13.	Himachal Pradesh	2560	2560	2460	2460	3283	3283	980	980
14.	Jammu and Kashmir	3060	3060	3353	3353	4462	4462	1411	1411
15.	Jharkhand	7871	7871	7140	7140	7942	7942	2282	2282
16.	Karnataka	30062	30062	28582	28582	35458	35458	12364	12364
17.	Kerala	11863	11863	14500	14500	18535	18535	7250	7250
18.	Ladakh	43	43	50	50	57	57	44	44
19.	Lakshadweep	51	51	43	43	49	49	16	16
20.	Madhya Pradesh	21447	21447	19440	19440	23108	23108	6528	6528
21.	Maharashtra	43360	43360	44918	44918	57852	57852	17884	17884
22.	Manipur	122	122	182	182	231	231	95	95
23.	Meghalaya	332	332	275	275	362	362	119	119
24.	Mizoram	65	65	67	67	126	126	46	46
25.	Nagaland	157	157	140	140	177	177	93	93
26.	Odisha	10514	10514	9316	9316	10621	10621	2910	2910
27.	Puducherry	284	284	274	274	524	524	163	163
28.	Punjab	8448	8448	7986	7986	20109	20109	3387	3387
29.	Rajasthan	40967	40967	29950	29950	35541	35541	9822	9822
30.	Sikkim	234	234	240	240	298	298	95	95
31.	Tamil Nadu	12812	12812	13822	13822	23535	23535	7873	7873
32.	Telangana	21596	21596	19114	19114	20984	20984	6866	6866
33.	Tripura	925	925	1035	1035	932	932	261	261
34.	Uttar Pradesh	61960	61960	55584	55584	62995	62995	18390	18390
35.	Uttarakhand	5031	5031	5082	5082	6136	6136	1885	1885
36.	West Bengal	30793	30793	38562	38562	31626	31626	7786	7786

ANNEXURE-II

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (e) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1680 FOR ANSWER ON 29.07.2026 REGARDING “CONSUMER PROTECTION AND E-COMMERCE REGULATION”.

- (a) In a Coaching institute Platform case, the Anuj Jindal coaching platform was penalised having found to create false urgency accompanied by a 24-hour timer which was found to be false and is a dark pattern practice of false urgency. CCPA directed discontinuation of the impugned advertisements and imposed a penalty of ₹3,00,000/-. The penalty deposited and the Coaching platform discontinued the dark patterns.
- (b) Based on the grievances lodged at National Consumer Helpline, the CCPA issued notice to a major airline {InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo Airline)} for alleged unfair trade practices / dark pattern pertaining to ‘Confirm Shaming’ on IndiGo Airlines App and Lack of Transparent Communication on Seat Assignment. After the CCPA intervention, IndiGo Airline has resolved the issue by changing the wording to *"No, I will not add to the trip"*, which ensures clarity and neutrality. The wordings used earlier were *"No I will take risk"*, which amounted to ‘confirm shaming’ a Dark Pattern has been discontinued.
- (c) CCPA examined consumer grievances regarding misleading price representations on the FirstCry platform, particularly the display of “MRP inclusive of all taxes” while charging additional GST at checkout constituted drip pricing. CCPA issued directions to discontinue the practice and ensure that both original and discounted prices are displayed as tax-inclusive, with any additional charges disclosed upfront. The Authority further directed FirstCry to rectify its website and mobile application to reflect final prices inclusive of all taxes, and subsequently imposed a penalty of **₹2,00,000/-** on the company. The company has deposited the penalty and amended its practices.
- (d) Action was taken against PharmaEasy wherein it was observed that the company was automatically adding PLUS membership in consumer’s cart. In its response, company confirmed that going forward, the PLUS membership will be an option in requiring consent of the consumer. The company has discontinued the practice and a penalty of **₹1,00,000/-** is imposed. The company deposited the penalty and discontinued the dark pattern.
- (e) CCPA observed that Zepto Marketplace Pvt. Ltd. shows lower price initially to lure consumer, on checkout page handling charge and Zepto Pass membership fee is also added Adding of handling charge during checkout amounts to Drip Pricing as the prices are not shown upfront and adding Zepto Pass Membership fee without consent of the user amounts to Basket Sneaking. CCPA imposed a penalty of **₹7,00,000/-** and directed Zepto to immediately discontinue the practice of Dark Pattern and all the charges shown upfront should be summary of final checkout price. Zepto approached NCDRC and submitted the penalty with NCDRC. The dark pattern has been discontinued by the Zepto.
- (f) In the matter of McAfee LLC it was observed that instead of providing a fair and transparent choice for subscription such as *Cancel* or *Skip*, the notification forced / restricts the consumer to only two choices: Accept Risk or Renew Now. Pertinently, McAfee admitted that the renewal prompt lacked neutral opt-out options, forcing users to accept the actions. Based on this CCPA directed McAfee to ensure that no dark patterns are employed on its platform, website, application or any other digital interface a penalty of ₹1,00,000 was imposed. After the intervention of CCPA, McAfee submitted that India renewal interface has been modified and a neutral or opt-out option, namely “Skip”, has now been incorporated. McAfee deposited the penalty and discontinued the dark pattern.

- (g) CCPA had issued also notices to a major portal for booking movie tickets (BookMyShow) for dark patterns by imposing automatically an extra charge of Rs.1 on customers pre-tick without consent of the consumer after the booking of confirmed tickets. After CCPA's intervention booking portal addressed the issue of 'Basket Sneaking' by giving customers an option to choose whether or not they wish to contribute towards BookASmile. The dark pattern has been discontinued.
- h) CCPA took suo-motu cognizance of dark pattern practices by PhysicsWallah Limited (PW). PW deployed the following dark patterns (basket sneaking i.e. a donation of ₹10 to PW Foundation was automatically pre-selected during checkout without explicit consumer consent and emotionally persuasive messaging was displayed to nudge consumers into retaining the pre-selected donation amount. Courses advertised as "free" required mandatory disclosure of personal information before access was granted. CCPA directed to ensure that no dark patterns are deployed on any of its digital interfaces and imposed a penalty of ₹5,00,000/-. PhysicsWallah deposited the penalty and discontinued the dark pattern.
- i) CCPA, acting suo-motu against SpiceJet Limited, found that its website pre-ticked a checkbox enrolling consumers into the "SpiceClub Loyalty Program" while leaving the opt-out for promotional communications unticked, thereby making choices on consumers' behalf without any active, informed action. Even after CCPA's notice, SpiceJet merely replaced the unticked opt-out box with a new pre-ticked box stating consent to receive communications, continuing the same default-consent practice. CCPA held this to constitute "Trick Question," "Forced Action," and "Interface Interference" under the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023, amounting to misleading advertisement, unfair trade practice, and unfair contract and violating Rule 4(9) of the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, which requires consent through explicit, affirmative action rather than pre-ticked defaults. SpiceJet attributed the lapse to a "technical error" and submitted an undertaking confirming permanent rectification. CCPA directed SpiceJet to maintain the corrective measures on a continuous basis, remain compliant at all times, and imposed a penalty of ₹1,00,000/-. Order issued on 14.07.2026. The SpiceJet has discontinued the dark pattern.
