

Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026

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Why in News?

The Department of Consumer Affairs notified the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026, amending the original 2020 framework framed under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Key Provisions

- It will be implemented on **January 1, 2027**.
- The revised rules tighten regulations around **price transparency, search algorithm bias, dark patterns, and grievance redressal**.
- **Price Transparency**
 - To eliminate "fake discounts," whenever a platform advertises a price cut, it must display the reduced price alongside the "prior price".
 - "Prior price" is statutorily defined as the **lowest price** at which the item/service was offered on the platform over the **preceding 30 days**.
- **Search Algorithms**
 - **Search Result Neutrality** - Prohibits platforms from manipulating search algorithms or indices in ways that mislead buyers or distort result relevance.
 - **Algorithmic Disclosures** - Marketplace entities must publicly publish a plain-language explanation of the main parameters used to determine search ranking/visibility.
 - **Sponsored Content** - Mandates clear, prominent, and distinct labels on all sponsored listings to differentiate paid exposure from organic results.
- **Mandatory Dark Pattern Audits**
 - Requires strict compliance with the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns (2023).
 - Platforms must conduct an annual self-audit verifying that their user interfaces are free of deceptive design patterns and publicly display a Certificate of Compliance on their websites/apps.
- **Integration with NCH**
 - Every e-commerce platform must integrate into the NCH convergence process to streamline complaint handling.
 - NCH received ~17.71 lakh grievances in 2025, with e-commerce accounting for nearly **29%** (over 5.11 lakh complaints).
 - Platforms are required to issue consumers an official recorded copy of their lodged complaint via their internal Grievance Officer.
- **Data Governance**
 - **Consumer Consent** - Marketplace entities are barred from using consumer data to

promote marketplace-owned private labels or preferred sellers without obtaining express, affirmative consent.

- **Unbundled Fees-** Prohibits platforms from auto-adding or collecting bundled charges for services unrelated to the primary transaction (excluding authorized loyalty/membership programs).
- **Enhanced Disclosures-** Marketplaces must display essential product information, including expiry/use-before dates, return/refund policies, warranty terms, and for imported goods, the full country of origin and importer details.

SAFE SHOPPING STRONGER CONSUMERS Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026 Stronger Protections for a Fairer and More Transparent Digital Marketplace E-COMMERCE FOR A MORE TRUSTED TOMORROW		
Key Aspect	Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020	2026 Amendments
 1. Grievance redressal	Grievance officer framework for e-commerce entities.	Complainant gets a copy of the complaint as recorded; every e-commerce entity to partner in National Consumer Helpline convergence .
 2. Search and ranking	General disclosure framework.	No misleading manipulation of search results; ranking defined more clearly.
 3. Sponsored listings	Transparency requirements.	Clear and prominent sponsored-listing disclosure .
 4. Discounts	Existing price transparency provisions.	Display reduced price and prior price ; prior price = lowest price in the preceding 30 days.
 5. Dark patterns	Existing consumer-protection framework.	Comply with 2023 Dark Patterns Guidelines; annual self-audit ; prominently displayed compliance certificate .
 6. Seller/product information	Existing disclosures.	Mandatory disclosure of best-before/use-before, return/refund, warranty, delivery and payment details .
 7. Consumer data	Privacy safeguards.	Express and affirmative consent for specified uses.
 8. Bundled fees	General transparency requirements.	No bundled fees for unrelated services , with specified loyalty/membership exception.
 9. Imported goods	Existing disclosures.	Disclosure of importer details and country of origin .
Effective: 1 January 2027 Objective: Transparency • Accountability • Fair Digital Marketplace EMPOWERED CONSUMERS STRONGER INDIA		
SHOP SAFE KNOW YOUR RIGHTS CHOOSE WISELY A FAIR DIGITAL INDIA		

Significance

- **Combating Deceptive Trade Practices-** Directly targets manipulative interface practices, artificial price inflating before sales events, and hidden fees.
- **Levelling the Playing Field** - Prevents marketplace platforms from abusing proprietary search ranking algorithms to favor their in-house brands over independent third-party sellers.
- **Consumer Empowerment-** Improves pre-purchase transparency for online buyers while speeding up dispute resolutions via seamless integration with government helplines.

Reference

[Times of India | Govt tightens e-commerce rules](#)