

Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister to meet stakeholders on dark patterns

Major e-commerce companies in food, pharmacy, travel, cosmetics, retail, clothing, electronics sectors to participate

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Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and New & Renewable Energy, Shri Pralhad Joshi will address consumer concerns regarding dark patterns in a high-level stakeholder meeting on 28th May 2025 in New Delhi. This meeting also aims to explore more effective solutions to tackle the issue.

All major e-commerce platforms, working in food, travel, cosmetics, pharmacy, retail, clothing and electronics sectors will participate in the meeting. Some of the key stakeholders are Amazon, Flipkart, 1mg.com, Apple, BigBasket, Meesho, Meta, MakeMyTrip, Paytm, Ola, Reliance Retail Limited, Swiggy, Zomato, Yatra, Uber, Tata, EaseMyTrip, Clear Trip, IndiaMart, IndiGo Airlines, xigo, JUSTDIAL, Medika Bazaar, Netmeds, ONDC, Thomas Cook, and WhatsApp. The list reinforces Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India's belief that industry participation is crucial in advancing consumer rights and ensuring a transparent, trustworthy marketplace.

Key industry organizations, as well as Voluntary Consumer Organizations (VCOs) and leading National Law Universities (NLUs) will also be active participants in this meeting. Their insights, research, and regulatory perspectives will provide valuable input into shaping robust and enforceable solutions.

The Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, in its unwavering commitment to safeguarding consumer rights and promoting fair trade practices, is proactively working to curb the unfair trade practice of dark patterns—deceptive user interface designs that mislead or manipulate consumers into making unintended choices. These practices erode consumer trust, distort fair market dynamics, and pose a serious threat to the integrity of digital commerce.

The Department has taken several significant steps to combat dark patterns. After extensive stakeholder consultation, the department issued comprehensive guidelines on the prevention of dark patterns on 30th November 2023 recognizing 13 prominent dark patterns in e-commerce including False Urgency, Basket Sneaking, Confirm Shaming, Forced action, Subscription trap, Interface interference, Bait and Switch, Drip Pricing, Disguised advertisement, Nagging, Trick question, Saas Billing, and Rogue Malwares.

Among the Department's pioneering initiatives is the Dark Patterns Buster Hackathon 2023, launched on 26th October 2023 in collaboration with IIT (BHU). This nationwide innovation challenge invited students and individuals from IITs, NITs, and other universities to design technological solutions—apps, browser extensions, and AI tools—to detect and fight dark patterns. Building upon the outcomes of the hackathon, the Department has since developed, in collaboration with IIT (BHU) three powerful consumer protection apps which were launched on National Consumers Day 2024.

The department has done widespread consumer awareness campaigns and actively monitors e-commerce platforms to identify and discourage deceptive practices. The Department has also engaged in continuous dialogue with e-commerce platforms, policy think tanks, and consumer organizations to ensure a holistic and inclusive approach to consumer protection in e-commerce.

The Department emphasizes that consumer protection and ease of doing business are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are complementary goals. This stakeholder meeting exemplifies the Department's progressive, participatory approach to governance—one that strengthens the regulatory ecosystem while promoting a level playing field for businesses.

By fostering such public-private partnerships, the Department of Consumer Affairs continues to champion a future where consumer safety is paramount and digital marketplaces are governed by fairness, transparency, and accountability.

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