



CONSUMER

Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026: A Comprehensive Regulatory Overhaul of India's Digital Marketplace

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The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, acting through the Department of Consumer Affairs, has notified the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026, vide Notification No. CG-DL-E-10092026-276125, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (i), dated 9 September 2026. The amendment rules have been framed in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (zg) of sub-section (2) of Section 101 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and constitute the most significant recalibration of India's e-commerce regulatory framework since the enactment of the principal Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020.

The principal rules, notified as G.S.R. 462(E) dated 23 July 2020, were promulgated under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and for the first time created a dedicated regulatory architecture for electronic commerce in India, prescribing distinct obligations for marketplace entities, inventory e-commerce entities, and sellers operating on digital platforms, alongside robust consumer grievance redressal mechanisms. The 2026 amendments respond to the evolving complexities of the digital marketplace, addressing concerns ranging from algorithmic manipulation and dark patterns to data-driven self-preferencing by large platforms.

The notification commences by substituting the definition of “ranking” under Rule 3(1)(j). The revised definition encompasses the relative prominence or relevance accorded to sellers on a platform, or to goods and services offered through a marketplace e-commerce entity, irrespective of the technological means employed for such presentation, organisation, or communication. By adopting a technology-neutral formulation, the legislature has ensured that the definition captures algorithmic and machine-learning based curation, thereby closing a potential loophole that platforms could otherwise have exploited.

Turning to Rule 4, which prescribes obligations applicable to all e-commerce entities, the amendments substitute sub-rules (4) through (7) in their entirety. Under the substituted sub-rule (4), every e-commerce entity is now statutorily obligated to display, in a clear and accessible manner and at a prominent place on its platform, its legal name, the principal geographic address of its headquarters and all branches, the name and details of its website, and the contact particulars of its customer care and grievance officer, including e-mail address, landline and mobile numbers.

The substituted sub-rule (5) introduces stringent timelines for grievance redressal. The grievance officer is now required to acknowledge the receipt of any consumer complaint within forty-eight hours, furnish the complainant with a copy of the complaint as recorded, and redress the complaint within one month from the date of its receipt. This temporal discipline marks a departure from the relatively open-ended obligations under the 2020 framework and reflects the legislature's intent to make grievance redressal meaningful rather than merely formalistic.

Under sub-rule (6), entities offering imported goods or services for sale must disclose the name and details of the importer from whom such goods or services have been purchased, or who may be a seller on the platform. Additionally, the entity must provide for the identification of goods and mention the full and complete name of the country of origin of such goods imported into India, in conformity with the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011. This provision acquires particular significance in the context of heightened consumer awareness regarding the provenance of goods and concerns surrounding undisclosed imports.

Sub-rule (7) mandates that every e-commerce entity become a partner in the convergence process of the National Consumer Helpline of the Central Government, thereby integrating private platforms with the government's consumer protection infrastructure and creating a unified channel for complaint escalation.

Beyond these substitutions, the amendment inserts a new clause (c) in sub-rule (11), expressly prohibiting e-commerce entities from misleading users by manipulating search results or search indexes having regard to the user's search query. This prohibition directly confronts the practice whereby platforms steer consumer choice through opaque algorithmic intervention.

Four entirely new sub-rules are further inserted after sub-rule (11), each addressing a distinct market failure. The first requires that sponsored listings of products and services be distinctly identified with clear and prominent disclosure, ensuring that consumers are aware when commercial consideration, rather than organic relevance, determines the placement of offerings. The second addresses price transparency: where an e-commerce entity or seller announces a reduction in price for any goods or services, the prior price must be displayed alongside the reduced price. The explanation appended to this provision defines “prior price” as the lowest price of the good or service thirty days prior to the announcement of the price reduction, thereby foreclosing the practice of inflating reference prices to manufacture illusory discounts.

The third new sub-rule requires every e-commerce entity to display clearly and prominently, in its invoice, the name of the seller in the same font size as that of the e-commerce entity's own name. This seemingly technical requirement carries substantive

weight, as it prevents platforms from obscuring the identity of the actual contracting seller, a practice that has historically impeded consumers in identifying the correct party against whom claims for deficiency in service or defect in goods may be pursued. The fourth sub-rule obligates e-commerce entities to comply with the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023, and to conduct a yearly self-audit to ensure that their platforms remain free from dark patterns, with a certificate to that effect being prominently displayed. This marks the first statutory incorporation of the dark patterns guidelines into the rulebook, converting what was previously advisory guidance into an enforceable compliance obligation backed by audit requirements.

The amendments to Rule 5, governing marketplace e-commerce entities, are equally consequential. Under sub-rule (3), clause (a) is substituted to require disclosure of detailed particulars about sellers offering goods and services on the platform, including the name of their business, whether registered or not, their geographic address, customer care number, website details, e-mail address, and any rating or aggregated feedback concerning such seller, together with any other information necessary to enable consumers to make informed decisions at the pre-purchase stage. A proviso additionally obligates the marketplace entity, upon a written request made by a consumer after purchase, to furnish information regarding the seller from whom the consumer made the purchase, including the principal geographic address of the seller's headquarters and all branches, website details, e-mail address, and such other information as may be necessary for effective dispute resolution. This post-purchase disclosure right remedies the information asymmetry that frequently leaves consumers without recourse after a transaction has been concluded.

Clause (c) of sub-rule (3) prescribes disclosure of information relating to return, refund, exchange, warranty and guarantee, best before or use before date, delivery and shipment, modes of payment, and the grievance redressal mechanism. A proviso clarifies that in respect of food products, the requirement relating to display of best before or use before dates remains subject to the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and the regulations framed thereunder, thereby preserving the primacy of food safety legislation in its domain.

Clause (f) introduces a novel transparency obligation: every marketplace entity must provide an explanation of the main parameters, in descending order, which individually or collectively are most significant in determining the ranking of goods or sellers on its platform, together with the relative importance of those parameters, communicated through an easily and publicly available description drafted in plain and intelligible language. In an era where ranking algorithms determine commercial success or failure, this obligation forces platforms to render their algorithmic logic intelligible to the ordinary consumer.

The insertion of two new sub-rules after sub-rule (5) addresses the misuse of data and bundling practices. The first prohibits any marketplace e-commerce entity from using information collected by it for the sale of goods, directly or indirectly, by any seller bearing a brand or name common with that of the marketplace entity, whether related or not; nor may such information be used to promote or advertise any seller as being associated with the marketplace, unless express and affirmative consent for such use has been obtained from the consumer or consumers concerned. This provision confronts the conflict-of-interest inherent in platforms that operate both as marketplaces for third-party sellers and as competitors to those sellers through private-label offerings, a practice that has attracted considerable regulatory scrutiny globally.

The second inserted sub-rule prohibits marketplace entities from collecting bundled fees from users for services provided on the e-commerce platform that are unrelated to the platform itself. A proviso, however, exempts loyalty or membership programmes, along with any benefit, service, offer or incentive provided in connection with or pursuant to such programmes, recognising the legitimate commercial function of structured loyalty schemes.

With respect to Rule 6, which prescribes the duties of sellers on marketplace platforms, clause (d) of sub-rule (5) is substituted to require sellers to display all relevant details concerning the goods and services offered for sale, including the country of origin, best before or use before date, information pertaining to return, refund, exchange, warranty and guarantee, delivery and shipment, cost and return shipping, and modes of payment, together with any other similar information necessary for enabling the consumer to make an informed decision at the pre-purchase stage, subject once again to the Food Safety and Standards Act proviso for food products. Furthermore, a new clause (j) is inserted after clause (i), requiring sellers to display any identification number issued by the Central Government, including the Goods and Services Tax Identification Number or the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises registration number. This requirement enhances traceability and enables consumers and regulators alike to verify the legitimacy of sellers.

Finally, Rule 7(1)(a), applicable to inventory e-commerce entities, is substituted to require such entities to provide accurate information relating to return, refund, exchange, best before or use before date, warranty and guarantee, delivery and shipment, cost of return shipping, modes of payment, grievance redressal mechanism, and any other similar information required by consumers to make informed decisions, with the customary proviso subordinating food product labelling to the Food Safety and

Standards Act, 2006 and its regulations.

Taken collectively, the 2026 amendments reflect a coherent legislative philosophy: transparency is treated as the antidote to algorithmic opacity, temporal discipline is imposed upon grievance redressal, price integrity is protected through reference-price regulation, and the structural conflicts of interest inherent in platform commerce are subjected to consent-based and disclosure-based constraints. For e-commerce entities operating in India, compliance with the amended framework will necessitate revisiting platform architecture, invoice formats, ranking disclosure statements, audit protocols, and data usage policies. For consumers, the amendments substantially augment the informational and remedial toolkit available in the digital marketplace, reinforcing the foundational promise of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 in the e-commerce domain.

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Related Practice Areas

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