

Central Consumer Protection Authority directs 'Yatra' an online Travel Platform to refund booking amount to consumers affected due to Covid-19 lockdown

Over 2.5 Crore still pending for refund from Yatra, approx 23 Crores refunded to Consumers

For seamless resolution of Consumer Grievances, National Consumer Helpline appoints five professionals through agency

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It came to the notice of the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** through National Consumer Helpline (1915-toll free number) that many grievances were lodged relating to non-refund of cancelled air tickets on account of COVID-19 lock down wherein the consumers had alleged that the travel agencies informed them that refunds have not been received from the airlines etc.

The Apex Court in its decision in Pravasi Legal Cell vs Union of India (W.P.(C)D.No.10966 of 2020) dated 01.10.2020 had directed that:

"If the tickets have been booked during the lockdown period through a travel agent for a travel within the lockdown period, in all such cases full refund shall be given by the airlines immediately. On such refund, the amount shall be passed on immediately by the agent to the passengers".

In light of the above, the CCPA initiated *suo-moto* action against Yatra regarding non refund of airline tickets cancelled due to Covid-19 lockdown.

Show Cause Notice vide dated 09.03.2021 was sent to this travel company regarding pendency of refunds of bookings which got affected in Covid-19. In pursuant to that CCPA conducted several hearings of the Company and closely monitor the progress of refunds made to the consumers.

From July 8, 2021, to June 25, 2024, the CCPA conducted several hearings to address these issues. As a result of these efforts, Yatra Online Limited has made significant progress in reducing the total number of pending refund bookings. In 2021, there were 36,276 pending bookings amounting to ₹26,25,82,484. As of June 21, 2024, this number has been significantly reduced to 4,837 bookings, amounting to ₹2,52,87,098. Yatra has refunded approx 87% amount to consumers and further endeavor to refund approx 13% amount to consumers in order to ensure that all pending refunds are processed promptly and efficiently by airlines.

In 2021, there were total 5,771 bookings pertaining to airlines pending for refunds amounting to ₹9,60,14,463. By 2024, Yatra has reduced the pendency of airlines to 98 bookings with an outstanding amount of ₹31,79,069. CCPA vide order dated 27.06.2024 directed 22 remaining airlines of Yatra to expeditiously refund ₹31,79,069 to consumers.

During the proceedings held before CCPA, several other travel platforms like MakeMyTrip, EaseMyTrip, ClearTrip, Ixigo and Thomas Cook have refunded the entire amount to Consumers whose tickets got affected due to Covid-19 lockdown.

To further facilitate timely processing of refunds to consumers, CCPA issued an order on 27.06.2024 wherein it directed Yatra to set up dedicated arrangements at the National Consumer Helpline (NCH). Specifically, Yatra is required to allocate five exclusive seats at NCH for making calls to the remaining 4,837 passengers informing them that their pending refunds due to COVID-19 lockdown-related flight cancellations will be processed. The costs incurred for engaging these five dedicated personnel will be fully covered by Yatra with payments made directly to the agency managed by NCH.

The CCPA's order reinforces the importance of timely refunds and Yatra is directed to adhering to this directive to ensure complete resolution for all pending bookings.

AD/NS

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