

Central Consumer Protection Authority

Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi --110001

Case No: CCPA-2/24/2024-CCPA

In the matter of: Misleading advertisement by Vajiram and Ravi IAS Study Centre LLP with respect to UPSC CSE 2023 advertisements.

CORAM:

Mrs. Nidhi Khare, Chief Commissioner

Mr. Anupam Mishra, Commissioner

APPEARANCES

For Vajiram and Ravi IAS Study Centre LLP:

1. Mr. B. Badhrinath, Advocate

Date: 29.05.2026

ORDER

1. This is a suo-moto case taken up by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (hereinafter referred as 'CCPA') against Vajiram and Ravi IAS Study Centre LLP (hereinafter referred as 'opposite party') with regard to alleged misleading advertisements on its official website (www.vajiramandravi.com). The following claims were made in the advertisement-

- i. *"8 Rank Holders in the Top 10 are from Vajiram & Ravi"*
- ii. *"Fact: Every year, more than 30% of the officers selected through UPSC Civil Services Examination are students of Vajiram & Ravi."*
- iii. *"37 Rank Holders in the Top 50 are from Vajiram & Ravi." (Annexure- 1)*

2. Taking cognizance of the issue, the CCPA in exercise of power conferred under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (hereinafter referred to as 'the Act') conducted a preliminary inquiry to examine authenticity of the claims in the impugned advertisement made by the opposite party.

3. During the course of preliminary inquiry, the CCPA prima facie observed that the opposite party had published above mentioned claims and prominently featured the names and pictures of successful candidates of the UPSC Civil Service Examination (CSE) 2023. Opposite party simultaneously also advertised various types of courses offered by it namely: "G.S. 2 years PCM -Online & Offline (G.S. 2 Year Comprehensive Programme), G.S. PCM -Online & Offline (G.S. PCM Comprehensive Classroom Programme), Optional Subject, Optional Subject Programme, CHENNAI G.S (10- Month PCM G.S Comprehensive Programme) and 10-M ACE –Online (ACE College Foundation Programmme)."

4. It is relevant to state that the CCPA is established under Section 10 of the Act for the purpose of regulating matters relating to the violation of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and false or misleading advertisements that are prejudicial to the interests of consumers as a class. Further, Section 18 of the Act empowers the CCPA to ensure that no false or misleading advertisement is made in respect of any goods or services in contravention of the provisions of this Act or the rules and regulations framed thereunder. This provision, when read with Section 2(9) of the Act, which recognizes consumer rights, including the right to be informed so as to enable consumers to make informed choices and decisions, highlights the requirement of transparency, accuracy, and full disclosure in advertisements. These provisions confer jurisdiction upon the CCPA to examine, inquire into, and take appropriate action against misleading advertisements issued by service providers, including coaching institutes.

5. As per the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022, Clause 4 mandates that any claim made in an advertisement must be truthful and should not mislead consumers with unsubstantiated claims.

6. The CCPA prima facie observed that such practices of making the abovementioned claims, combined with the use of the names and pictures of successful candidates in the impugned advertisement while concealing important

information, might mislead consumers as a class. Therefore, abovementioned claims prima facie appeared to be contrary to the various provisions of the Act and the applicable Guidelines.

7. Accordingly, the CCPA issued a notice dated 17.05.2024 to the opposite party for alleged violation of the provisions of the Act, highlighting the issue of alleged misleading advertisements via concealing important information, i.e., the specific courses opted for by the successful candidates and making tall claims with respect to UPSC CSE 2023.

8. The opposite party was granted an opportunity to furnish a response within 15 days from the date of issuance of the notice and was directed to submit the following documents to substantiate its claims:

- i. Details of successful UPSC CSE 2023 candidates claimed to be from Institute.
- ii. Enrolment/consent form of such student.
- iii. Type of course attended by such student.
- iv. Duration of the course attended by such student.
- v. Date of joining of each such student.
- vi. Fees paid along with the copies of receipt.
- vii. Requisite data/evidence to substantiate the following claims.
 - a. 8 Rank Holders in the Top 10 are from Vajiram & Ravi
 - b. Fact: Every year, more than 30% of the officers selected through UPSC Civil Services Examination are students of Vajiram & Ravi.
 - c. 37 Rank Holders in the Top 50 are from Vajiram & Ravi.

9. Opposite party vide email dated 06.06.2024 submitted its reply wherein it submitted the following:-

- i. We "Vajiram & Ravi IAS Study Centre LLP "received the above notice by post, on 24th of May, 2024 although the notice is dated 17th May 2024. We would like to inform the concerned authority at CCPA that unfortunately, the directors of institution were out of station from 24th May and will tentatively be back to Delhi only on 4th June 2024.

- ii. Sir, the information that is cited in the notice needs the presence of the directors to be collected and as such we have not been able to collate the details of the information requested by CCPA. Hence, we humbly request the authorities to grant us time till 28 June 2024 to prepare our response with credible information and to present to you all the details sought for.
 - iii. However, we could make the changes in the official website with the limited information we had in the absence of the directors. I am hereby attaching the changes being made to the website to reflect the seriousness with which we take the concerns cited in the notice of CCPA. To add further, we are always open to cooperating and assisting the commission in establishing an empowered consumers and helping them make informed choices.
 - iv. Additionally, the commission has brought to our attention a statement on our website which claims: "Fact: Every year, more than 30% of the officers selected through UPSC Civil Services Examination are students of Vajiram & Ravi ." While our intention is not to mislead anyone, but rather to highlight Vajiram and Ravi's significant role in many aspirants' journeys. However, with due respect for CCPA we have removed the statement from the website. We want to assure you that there was no intention to deceive or mislead anyone.
 - v. I would like to register it with the commission that Vajiram and Ravi, has been instrumental in helping many aspirants successfully clear the exam for many decades and there is no mala-fide intention whatsoever in any manner involved in using the names, photos or videos of the toppers of 2023 UPSC CSE.
 - vi. We support the active role of CCPA in creating a well-informed consumer base and will always be available for any assistance in the said direction. Also, sir, if you require my presence in person, I am hereby available to present my case as well to you.
10. The CCPA considered the request made by the opposite party for grant of time to file their detailed response. Accordingly, the CCPA, vide mail dated 24.06.2024, directed the opposite party to submit the requisite documents by 30.06.2024.

11. Thereafter, opposite party email dated 29.06.2024 submitted the following:
- i. It is a well-established and reputed coaching institute operating for the past 48 years, offering preparation for all three stages of the UPSC Civil Services Examination. It is one of the oldest and most sought-after coaching institutions in India, attracting students from across the country both through classroom and online modes.
 - ii. Submitted details of 413 successful candidates in UPSC CSE 2023 whom it claims as its students. This included 8 rank holders within the top 10 ranks and 37 rank holders within the top 50 ranks of UPSC CSE 2023. The details were submitted in the prescribed format including name of candidate, enrolment/consent form, type of course enrolled, duration, date of joining, and fees paid along with invoices.
 - iii. The institute offers a wide range of courses covering all stages of the UPSC examination. These include: General Studies Pre cum Mains (Classroom/Live Online), CSAT, Optional Subject programmes, Prelims and Mains Test Series, Step-Up Mentorship Programme, Modular Courses (Essay, Ethics, and Economy etc.), Postal Courses, Enrichment Courses, and an Interview Guidance Program. The institute's position is that any candidate who has enrolled for any course at any stage of the examination whether Preliminary, Mains, or Interview is considered their student, and accordingly, their claim of association with successful candidates is based on this inclusive definition.
 - iv. With respect to the break-up of the 413 successful candidates: 258 candidates had enrolled only in the Interview Guidance Program, which is offered free of charge and therefore carries no fee receipts. Enrolment for this program is done through an online form only. 153 candidates had enrolled in other paid courses offered by the institute, in addition to the Interview Guidance Program.
 - v. On the allegation that the information published on its website was misleading or deceptive, the institute denied the same and stated that the website content is merely a summary of the institute's achievements and does not purport to be a detailed information brochure. It was further submitted that UPSC aspirants are highly educated, intelligent, and discerning consumers who are well capable of seeking further clarification about courses and achievements before

making enrollment decisions. The institute also offers pre-admission counselling to assist students in selecting appropriate courses.

- vi. On the specific allegation of visual deception that the website created a misleading impression that successful candidates had studied particular advertised courses the institute denied this as purely conjectural and without any factual basis. It was stated that the general information regarding students' achievements, accessible throughout the website, cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean that successful candidates had specifically opted for the course under which such information appears.
- vii. The institute further submitted that it has, pending the present inquiry and without prejudice to its rights, proactively made comprehensive amendments to its website to provide greater clarity regarding the details of successful candidates, particularly the specific courses pursued by them at Vajiram & Ravi. These changes were communicated to the Commission vide an earlier letter dated 2nd June 2024.
- viii. The institute also stated that it maintains a transparent fee refund policy in the event of a student seeking withdrawal from admission, as an additional safeguard for consumer interest.
- ix. The institute expressed its willingness to provide any further information as may be required by the CCPA.

12. On examination of the responses submitted by the opposite party, CCPA observed that out of 413 successful candidates, 258 candidates had enrolled only in the Interview Guidance Program, which is a short-duration program that comes into play only after a candidate has already cleared both the Preliminary and Mains stages of the UPSC Civil Services Examination on their own merit. This program is offered free of charge. Therefore, associating such candidates with the institute's broader coaching programs and projecting them as products of Vajiram & Ravi's academic preparation while simultaneously advertising full-length paid courses such as "G.S. 2 years PCM – Online & Offline", "Optional Subject Programme" etc. prima facie amounts to deliberate concealment of material information from consumers.

13. Furthermore, the CCPA noted that the opposite party failed to furnish enrolment forms or consent forms establishing that the concerned candidates had given their consent to the opposite party to use their names and photographs in its advertisements. The impugned advertisement, by prominently featuring the names, photographs, and ranks of successful UPSC CSE 2023 candidates alongside advertisements for paid full-time courses, without disclosing the specific nature or duration of the course actually availed by such candidates, prima facie creates a misleading impression in the minds of consumers that these successful candidates were recipients of the institute's substantive and comprehensive coaching programs. Such non-disclosure of material information is contrary to the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022.

14. In view of the above, the CCPA was satisfied that a prima facie case of misleading advertisement through deliberate concealment of material information existed against the opposite party. Accordingly, in exercise of its powers under the Act, the CCPA, vide letter dated 12.07.2024, referred the matter to the Director General (Investigation) for conducting a detailed investigation into the matter.

15. The Director General (Investigation) in its investigation report dated 18.03.2026 submitted the following:

- i. Several coaching institutes use the names and photographs of the same students in their advertisements and promotional materials while concealing the specific course opted for by such students. This makes it difficult for consumers to ascertain from which coaching institute the student pursued a particular course. Therefore, disclosure of the specific course opted for by successful candidates in such advertisements constitutes important information for consumers. It is important to note that the Act confers upon consumers the right to be informed, which includes the right to receive truthful and accurate information enabling them to make informed choices. The impugned claims, coupled with the use of the names and photographs of successful candidates while concealing material information namely, the specific course opted for by

them undermine this right and adversely affect consumer interests, particularly in the field of education where aspirants invest significant time, effort, and financial resources.

- ii. As per various news reports, approx. 10-12 lakhs students apply for UPSC CSE exam every year and with such intense competition, students from all over India look up to various coaching institutes for guidance to qualify the examination. Coaching institutes attract potential aspirants through advertisements on various platforms. However, the issue arises when such claims through advertisements are unsubstantiated and without full disclosure.
- iii. 1st impugned Advertisement Claim: “8 Rank Holders in the Top 10 are from Vajiram & Ravi”. Investigation authority examined the documents submitted by the institute and found out that students asserted in the abovementioned impugned claim are enrolled in the following courses as follows: -

Impugned claim	Course name	No. of Students
“8 Rank Holders in the Top 10 are from Vajiram & Ravi”	Interview Guidance Program (IGP Course)	7 (ranks 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10)
	Sociology optional	1 (rank 8)
	Test Series	1 (rank 9)

- iv. 2nd Impugned Advertisement Claim: “Fact: Every year, more than 30% of the officers selected through UPSC Civil Services Examination are students of Vajiram & Ravi.” The institute stated that they have made the above statement based of the past 4 year’s result of UPSC CSE selections from the institute i.e. (2021-2024) Therefore, Investigation authority examined the documents submitted by the institute with respect to the above-mentioned claim found out that students asserted in the impugned claim are enrolled in the following courses as follows:

Courses	2021	% selection from course	2022	% selection from course	2023	% selection from course	2024	% selection from course
GS PCM Courses	82	31.06%	126	26.03%	76	18.58%	122	22.43%

Optional Subject Coaching	9	3.41%	25	5.17%	36	8.80%	31	5.70%
Interview Guidance Programme	228	86.36%	379	78.31%	399	97.56%	390	71.69%
GS Mentorship Programme	0	0%	1	0.21%	1	0.24%	3	0.55%
GS Mains Test Series	4	1.52%	25	5.17%	8	1.96%	27	4.96%
Optional Test Series & Enrichment Programme	21	7.95%	57	11.78%	39	9.54%	26	4.78%
Prelims Test Series	10	3.79%	32	6.61%	37	9.05%	55	10.11%
UPSC Module Courses	13	4.92%	53	10.95%	29	7.09%	164	30.15%
Grand Total	264/ 749	35.24%	485/ 1022	47.45%	411/ 1143	35.78%	544/ 1129	48.18%

- v. 3rd Impugned Advertisement Claim: "37 Rank Holders in the Top 50 are from Vajiram & Ravi" Investigation authority examined the documents submitted by the institute and found out that students asserted in the above mentioned impugned claim are enrolled in the following courses as follows:-

S. No.	Course Type	No. of Candidates	UPSC CSE 2023 Ranks
1.	Interview Guidance Program (IGP)	29	1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 46, 48, and 50
2.	Optional subjects: Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science	Sociology: 02 Anthropology: 01 Political Science: 01	Sociology: 8 th and 13 th Anthropology: 34 th Political Science: 26 th
3.	General Studies	9	13, 18, 21, 24, 29, 34, 37, 44, and 47;
4.	Test series: CSAT Prelims	CSAT Prelims: 01	CSAT Prelims: 24 th

5.	Online PowerUp Prelims Program and Test Series	Online PowerUp Prelims Program: 01 Test Series:01	Online PowerUp Prelims Program: 17th Test Series: 9 th
6.	Sociology Answer writing program	01	50 th

- vi. The institute submitted that they have revised its website (<https://vajiramandravi.com>) and started mentioning course-specific details after receiving CCPA's notice. Additionally, they submitted that the course details were mentioned in the newspaper advertisements. It is important to note that the subject matter in the present case concerns the advertisements on the institute's official website, and not those published in other print Medias.
- vii. Additionally, impugned claim was published on the institute's official website, which significantly increases its reach and influence over consumers across the country. A website is accessible nationwide and even globally, allowing a larger number of consumers to be misled by the false impression created. It is important to note that a website or online platforms, unlike newspaper, provides significantly greater flexibility, scalability, and scope for detailed disclosures where space is not a constraint. In the present era of digitalization, it is primary medium through which aspirants (consumers) research about coaching institutes, review their claims, and make their decision. The omission of course details on the website, despite their disclosure in newspapers which is limited to a day or two, clearly indicates a deliberate and mala fide intention to conceal important information from consumers, thereby projecting tall claims in the impugned advertisement on its website relating to UPSC CSE 2023. Therefore, it is safe to say that the Institute appears intentionally withheld crucial facts i.e. Specific course opted by successful candidates on its widely accessible digital platforms to mislead prospective aspirants under false pretenses.
- viii. The institute itself submitted that 411 candidates registered with us have been successful in UPSC CSE 2023. Out of 411 candidates, 258 candidates have registered only in Interview Guidance Programme and 153 students have registered in other courses in addition to Interview Guidance Programme.

Conclusion: In view of the findings recorded, it is conclusively established that Vajiram & Ravi indulged in violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, as well as the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022.

- ix. Vajiram & Ravi Institute, claimed as successful students at the Institute website, while deliberately omitting key details about the course they enrolled amounts to misleading advertisement, as defined under Section 2(28) of the Consumer Protection, 2019. Additionally, this practice amounts to a gross violation of consumer rights under Section 2(9) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, including the right to be informed and the right to be protected against unfair trade practices. Additionally, the Institute's conduct is in violation of paragraphs 4 and 12 of the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022 as its advertisements exaggerate Institute's achievements and make unsubstantiated claims which will mislead consumers regarding the institute's performance, thereby failing to ensure truthful and honest representation. These actions collectively amount to a misleading advertisement designed to induce consumer reliance under false pretenses, thereby attracting regulatory action under the applicable provisions of law.
16. The Investigation Report submitted by DG (Investigation) was shared with the opposite party vide letter dated 22.04.2026 to furnish its comments.
17. Thereafter, hearing was scheduled on 07.05.2026 during which Mr. B. Badhrinath, Advocate appeared on behalf of the opposite party and made the following submissions:
- i. On the Claim of "8 Rank Holders in the Top 10 are from Vajiram & Ravi": It was submitted that out of the top 10 ranks, 7 candidates had enrolled in the Interview Guidance Program, 1 had enrolled for Sociology Optional, and 1 had enrolled for the Test Series. The Opposite Party contended that all such candidates are its students and that the claim, as made, is truthful and substantiated.

- ii. On the Claim of "Every year, more than 30% of the officers selected through UPSC CSE are students of Vajiram & Ravi": It was submitted that any person who enrolls for any course offered by the institute at any stage of the examination, whether Preliminary, Mains, or Interview is considered a student of the institute, and accordingly the said claim is justified.
- iii. On the Claim of "37 Rank Holders in the Top 50 are from Vajiram & Ravi": The Opposite Party reiterated its position that all 37 candidates are duly enrolled students of the institute and that the claim is substantiated by enrolment records and supporting documents submitted during the course of investigation.
- iv. On the Allegation of Deliberate Concealment of Material Information: The Opposite Party contended that the information published on its website was not false and that the allegation of deliberate concealment of material information under Section 2(28) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 is not made out. It was submitted that clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of Section 2(28) require an element of falsity, which is absent in the present case. As regards clause (iv), which pertains to deliberate concealment of important information, the opposite party argued that the term "important information" must be understood in the context of "material information," and that materiality requires a direct bearing on the decision-making of the consumer.
- v. UPSC aspirants are highly educated, intelligent, and discerning consumers who are well capable of seeking further clarification before making enrolment decisions. The advertisement was not directed at an ordinary or unsophisticated consumer.
- vi. On the nature of the interview guidance program: It was submitted that the program commences immediately upon announcement of UPSC interview results and includes DAF analysis, current affairs sessions, one-to-one sittings with the Director, video analysis, mock interviews, and state-specific guidance.
- vii. Any candidate who avails of any service offered by the institute, at any stage of the examination, is a consumer of its services and is therefore its student.
- viii. Enrolment in the Interview Guidance Program is done through a structured online form, upon which the candidate is issued a user ID and password to

access the institute's services. In a given year, approximately 1,200 to 1,500 students enrol in the Interview Guidance Program.

- ix. It was submitted that upon receipt of the CCPA's notice dated 17.05.2024, it immediately rectified the website and made comprehensive amendments to provide greater clarity regarding the specific courses availed by successful candidates.
 - x. It was submitted that even if the CCPA were to conclude that the advertisement was misleading, the following mitigating factors ought to be considered while assessing any penalty:
 - a. The information disclosed was not found to be false; only its alleged incompleteness was in question.
 - b. The impugned advertisement remained on the website for approximately 30 days only and was rectified immediately upon receipt of notice.
 - c. There is no material on record to suggest that the opposite party gained any pecuniary or financial advantage on account of the impugned advertisement.
 - d. The prospective consumers are highly educated UPSC aspirants, not ordinary or unsophisticated consumers.
 - e. Any penal action would adversely affect the reputation of an institute that has been serving students for nearly 48 years.
18. During the course of the hearing, the CCPA directed the opposite party to submit, within 7 days, a short note containing the following information for the year under question (2023–24):
- i. Number of students enrolled in online and offline/classroom courses respectively.
 - ii. Details of the online curriculum, specifying which portions are available free of charge and which are paid.
 - iii. Overall modes through which the institute provides its services to students.

19. The opposite party filed a written reply dated 13.05.2026 in response to queries raised during the hearing dated 07.05.2026, submitting the following:
- i. Its IGP is a comprehensive 3-4 month course not a mere mock interview designed exclusively for UPSC CSE candidates who have cleared Prelims and Mains. It includes one-on-one mentoring, DAF-II guidance, current affairs classes, and mock interviews by retired bureaucrats, video analysis, and group discussions.
 - ii. Enrolment in IGP for the three years stood at 1,454 (CSE 2023), 1,510 (CSE 2024), and 1,129 (CSE 2025).
 - iii. Mobile Application (Vajiramias): its mobile app is primarily for enrolled students requiring login credentials, though current affairs content is freely accessible. App registrations for three consecutive years were: 72,599 (2023), 57,068 (2024), and 58,714 (2025), reflecting consistent institutional credibility.
 - iv. Courses and Enrolment Data: total enrolment figures across all courses for three years- 25,791 (2023), 26,534 (2024), and 24,283 (2025) arguing that the numbers remained broadly consistent across all three years, including 2024 (the year the notice was served). A month-on-month comparison was also submitted, showing that the June-July surge in admissions is a regular seasonal pattern attributable to the UPSC preparation cycle, not to any specific advertisement.
 - v. Newspaper advertisements were published in The Hindu and Indian Express on multiple dates in April-May 2024.
 - vi. Advertisement in question did not result in any exceptional gain or unfair advantage, as enrolment figures remained stable across the relevant period. It further submitted that any non-disclosure of specific course details in the advertisement was inadvertent and was rectified upon receipt of the Authority's notice. Opposite party accordingly requested closure of the complaint, asserting that the advertisement cannot be characterised as misleading for the purpose of gaining admissions.

20. It may be mentioned that Section- 2(28) of the Act defines "misleading advertisement" in relation to any product or service means an advertisement, which-

- i. falsely describes such product or service; or
- ii. gives a false guarantee to, or is likely to mislead the consumers as to the nature, substance, quantity or quality of such product or service; or
- iii. conveys an express or implied representation which, if made by the manufacturer or seller or service provider thereof, would constitute an unfair trade practice; or
- iv. Deliberately conceals important information.

21. It may be noted that what constitutes "important information" in an advertisement varies on a case-to-case basis and must be assessed from the consumer's perspective. In the present case, specific course opted by successful candidates is an important information for the potential consumer i.e. UPSC aspirants. Reason being this will directly influence the perception of prospective aspirants regarding the efficacy, scope, and quality of the services offered by the Institute. Non-disclosure of such information creates confusing & misleading impression that the successful candidates were comprehensively trained by the institute across all stages of the examination, including preliminary, mains, and interview stages, which may not be factually correct.

22. The CCPA has observed that several coaching institutes use the same successful candidates' names and photographs in their advertisements while deliberately concealing material information such as the course opted by them. It makes it virtually impossible for a consumer to ascertain which course, if any, the candidate had actually enrolled in at a particular institute. Such conduct amounts to unfair trade practice and deceptive advertisement, as it exploits the consumer's inability to independently verify the nature of the association between the candidate and the institute.

23. The opposite party has contended that UPSC aspirants are highly educated, intelligent, and discerning consumers who are well capable of seeking further

clarification before making enrolment decisions, and that the advertisement was not directed at an ordinary or unsophisticated consumer. This argument is misplaced and untenable. The CCPA is an authority established specifically for the purpose of protecting the interests of consumers in the modern marketplace, and the standard of consumer protection cannot be diluted merely on the ground of assumption that the target audience is educated. The responsibility lies squarely on the opposite party, being the service provider, to ensure that its advertisements are truthful, non-misleading, and do not exploit the aspirations of consumers irrespective of the educational profile of the consumer. The expectation that a consumer would independently verify or cross-check the claims made in an advertisement before taking admission cannot absolve the opposite party of its statutory obligations.

24. It is important to note that the doctrine of Caveat Emptor (“let the buyer beware”) has gradually evolved into Caveat Venditor (“let the seller beware”), thereby placing a greater onus on sellers and service providers. The doctrine of Caveat Venditor developed to impose enhanced obligations on sellers/service providers, and laws were enacted across the globe to protect consumer rights. In the modern world, consumer protection regimes have evolved with a focus on ensuring truthful and fair conduct by sellers, rather than burdening consumers with the sole responsibility of verification.

25. Further, the Act confers upon consumers the right to be informed, which includes the right to receive truthful and accurate information enabling them to make informed choices. Misleading advertisements undermine this right and adversely affect consumer interest, particularly in the field of education where aspirants invest significant time, effort, and financial resources.

26. UPSC Civil Service Examination (CSE) contains 3 phases i.e., Prelims, Mains and Interview. It is only after qualifying the two rigorous stages of Preliminary and Mains stage that candidates get a chance to appear for interview. While the Preliminary test is a screening test but the marks obtained in both the Mains Exams and the Interview are considered in the final selection merit list. The total marks for Main Exams and PT are 1750 and 275 respectively. According to various news

reports, approximately 10 to 11 lakhs aspirants apply for UPSC Civil Service Examination every year.

27. Opposite party published following claims on its official website along with names & pictures of successful candidates of UPSC CSE 2023 soon after the UPSC CSE 2023 result was declared on 16.04.2024 and CCPA issued notice to opposite party on 17.05.2024.

- i. *"8 Rank Holders in the Top 10 are from Vajiram & Ravi"*
- ii. *"Fact: Every year, more than 30% of the officers selected through UPSC Civil Services Examination are students of Vajiram & Ravi."*
- iii. *"37 Rank Holders in the Top 50 are from Vajiram & Ravi."*

28. It is important to note that opposite party had published above mentioned claims and simultaneously advertised various types of courses offered by it on its official website, namely: "G.S. 2 years PCM – Online & Offline, G.S. PCM – Online & Offline, Optional Subject, Optional Subject Programme, CHENNAI G.S and 10-M ACE - Online".

29. Opposite party submitted that the course details were mentioned in the newspaper advertisements. As rightly pointed out by the DG (Inv.) in its report that the subject matter in the present case concerns the advertisements on the institute's official website, and not those published in other print Media. Additionally, impugned claim was published on the institute's official website, which significantly increases its reach and influence over consumers across the country. A website is accessible nationwide and even globally, allowing a larger number of consumers to be misled by the false impression created. It is important to note that a website or online platforms, unlike newspaper, provides significantly greater flexibility, scalability, and scope for detailed disclosures where space is not a constraint. In the present era of digitalization, it is primary medium through which aspirants (consumers) research about coaching institutes, review their claims, and make their decision. The omission of course details on the website, despite their disclosure in newspapers which is limited to a day or two,

clearly indicates a deliberate intention to conceal important information from consumers.

30. The concealment of important details such as specific course opted by successful candidates will affect the ability of consumers to make an informed choice about which courses to enrol in and at what stage of their preparation of Civil Service Examination. For the potential consumers, true & honest information about specific courses taken by successful candidates would have contributed in their making an informed choice about the course to be opted for ensuring their success at CSE. These facts are important for the potential students to decide on the courses that may be suitable for them and must not be concealed in the advertisement. The effect of which is violation of Consumer rights u/s 2(9) of the Act. Such disclosure is therefore essential to enable aspirants to make an informed choice, and its omission amounts to concealment of material information from consumers.

31. It is noted that there is no dispute regarding courses offered by the opposite party's institute including both free and paid programmes, of varying durations. However, in the absence of clear and prominent disclosure of course type and duration, consumers are deprived of the ability to assess whether the claimed results are of long-term academic coaching, short-term test series or free interview guidance. Such disclosure is therefore essential to enable aspirants to make an informed choice, and its omission amounts to deliberate concealment of material information from consumers. Such non-disclosure amounts to a violation of consumer rights as defined under Section 2(9) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

32. Having considered the submissions of the opposite party, the investigation report of the DG (Investigation), and the material on record, the CCPA is of the view that the impugned claims published on the official website of the opposite party fall within the definition of "misleading advertisement" under Section 2(28) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, specifically clause (iv) thereof, which prohibits deliberate concealment of important information.

33. The investigation conducted by the DG (Investigation) has revealed that out of the 413 successful candidates claimed by the opposite party with respect to UPSC CSE 2023, 258 candidates constituting the majority had enrolled in the Interview Guidance Programme (IGP). Further, the IGP itself is offered free of charge by the opposite party. Similarly, with respect to the claim of "8 Rank Holders in the Top 10", the investigation found that 7 out of 8 candidates had enrolled only in the IGP, and with respect to the claim of "37 Rank Holders in the Top 50", 29 out of 37 candidates had enrolled only in the IGP. The pattern is unambiguous and consistent across all three impugned claims.

34. This pattern of overwhelming reliance on the Interview Guidance Programme is not an isolated phenomenon limited to UPSC CSE 2023 alone, but is consistently borne out by the data submitted by the opposite party itself across multiple years. As per the course-wise breakup of successful candidates examined by the DG (Investigation), the Interview Guidance Programme accounted for 228 out of 264 successful candidates in 2021 (86.36%), 379 out of 485 in 2022 (78.31%), 399 out of 411 in 2023 (97.56%), and 390 out of 544 in 2024 (71.69%). Year after year, the data establishes that the institute's claims of successful candidates are driven by enrolments in the free Interview Guidance Programme and yet, year after year, this material fact was concealed from prospective consumers on the institute's official website.

35. It is further pertinent to note that, as per available news reports, approximately 13 lakh aspirants applied for the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2023. Out of these, only 14,600 candidates appeared in the Mains examination, and a mere 2,916 advanced to the final stage of the Personality Test. Therefore, approximately one out of every three candidates who appeared for the Personality Test secured final selection. This implies that all candidates who reached the interview stage including those enrolled in the opposite party's Interview Guidance Programme had already independently cleared two highly competitive and rigorous stages of examination, namely the Preliminary and Mains examinations, entirely on their own merit and without any academic contribution from the opposite party at those stages. In other

words, the opposite party had no role in the success of these candidates at the Preliminary and Mains stages, yet it took full credit for their achievement by prominently displaying their names and photographs in its advertisements.

36. Despite this, the opposite party made no disclosure whatsoever, on its official website, of the specific course opted for by these successful candidates. The website, which is accessible nationwide and operates without any space constraint carried the names, photographs, and ranks of these successful candidates in a manner that a reasonable prospective aspirant would naturally and inevitably associate with the full suite of coaching programmes being simultaneously advertised on the same platform. The deliberateness of this concealment is further underscored by the fact that the opposite party did disclose course-specific details in its newspaper advertisements yet consciously chose not to do so on its website, which has a far wider, more persistent, and more influential reach. This selective omission cannot be characterised as inadvertent or accidental; it reflects a calculated decision to withhold material information from the very platform where prospective consumers make their research and enrolment decisions.

37. In view of the foregoing findings, it is established that the opposite party has indulged in misleading advertisement within the meaning of Section 2(28) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, by deliberately concealing important information, namely the specific courses opted for by successful candidates, while simultaneously making tall claims regarding the institute's results and prominently featuring the names and photographs of such candidates on its official website alongside advertisements for paid full-length coaching programmes. Such conduct is in violation of Section 2(9) of the Act, which confers upon consumers the right to be informed, and is contrary to paragraphs 4 and 12 of the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022.

38. The CCPA is empowered under Section- 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 to issue directions to the advertiser of false or misleading advertisement to discontinue or modify the advertisement and if necessary, it may, by order, impose a

penalty which may extend to ten lakh rupees and for every subsequent contravention may extend to fifty lakh rupees. Further, Section 21 (7) of the above Act prescribes that following may be regarded while determining the penalty against false or misleading advertisement:-

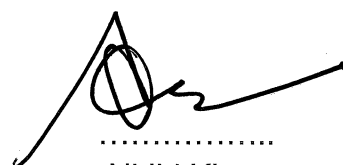
- a) the population and the area impacted or affected by such offence;
- b) the frequency and duration of such offence;
- c) the vulnerability of the class of persons likely to be adversely affected by such offence.

39. The CCPA notes that the opposite party operates physical coaching centres at two locations, namely New Delhi and Chennai, and simultaneously offers its courses through online modes as well, thereby catering students across the country through both offline and online mediums. Beyond its coaching presence, the opposite party commands a significant digital footprint, with approximately 6.5 lakh subscribers on its official YouTube channel and approximately 4.8 lakh followers on Instagram, in addition to total enrolments of 25,791 (2023), 26,534 (2024), and 24,283 (2025) across its various courses. It is further noted that the UPSC CSE 2023 result was declared on 16.04.2024, following which the impugned advertisement was published by the opposite party on its official website. The CCPA issued notice to the opposite party on 17.05.2024, approximately one month after the result was declared, and the opposite party removed the impugned advertisement only around 15 to 20 days after receipt of the said notice. Consequently, the misleading advertisement remained in the public domain for a period of approximately 40 to 50 days, during which it was accessible to lakhs of UPSC aspirants nationwide who were actively researching coaching institutes in the immediate aftermath of the result declaration, a period when prospective consumers are most vulnerable to such claims and most likely to make enrolment decisions. In view of the wide reach and impact of the impugned advertisement, and the significant number of UPSC aspirants who are potentially exposed to and influenced by such claims while making critical enrolment decisions, the CCPA is of the opinion that imposition of a penalty on the opposite party is necessary and warranted in the interest of consumers.

40. The CCPA has considered the mitigating factors submitted by the opposite party in determining the appropriate penalty. However, the CCPA is of the view that the mitigating factors cannot entirely absolve the opposite party of its statutory obligations. The concealment of course-specific information on a widely accessible digital platform, while disclosing the same in newspaper reflects a deliberate and conscious choice. The impugned advertisement, by its very design, was calculated to exploit the aspirations of lakhs of UPSC aspirants who invest significant time, effort, and financial resources in their preparation, and who rely on such claims to make critical enrolment decisions. The Act does not permit a service provider to selectively disclose material information and then seek refuge behind the argument of partial truthfulness.

41. In view of the above, under Section- 20, 21 read with Section 10 & 19 of the Act, CCPA hereby issues the following directions:-

- a. The opposite party is hereby directed to ensure that all future advertisements are in compliance with the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 or the rules, regulations or Guidelines made thereunder.
- b. The opposite party is directed to pay a penalty of ₹7,00,000 for indulging in misleading advertisement as established in the foregoing paragraphs.
- c. Submit a compliance report of the directions (a) & (b) above within 15 days of receipt of the Order.



.....
Nidhi Khare
Chief Commissioner



.....
Anupam Mishra
Commissioner

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8 Rank Holders in the Top 10 are from Vajiram & Ravi

Fact: Every year, more than 30% of the officers selected through UPSC Civil Services Examination are students of Vajiram & Ravi.



Aditya Srivastava
AIR 1 - UPSC CSE 2023



Animesh Pradhan
AIR 2 - UPSC CSE 2023



Donuru Ananya Reddy
AIR 3 - UPSC CSE 2023



Ruhani
AIR 5 - UPSC CSE 2023



Srishti Dabas
AIR 6 - UPSC CSE 2023



Ashish Kumar
AIR 8 - UPSC CSE 2023



Nausheen
AIR 9 - UPSC CSE 2023



Aishwaryam Prajapati
AIR 10 - UPSC CSE 2023

37 Rank Holders in the Top 50 are from Vajiram & Ravi



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Ruhani
AIR 5 - UPSC CSE 2023



Srishti Dabas
AIR 6 - UPSC CSE 2023



Ashish Kumar
AIR 8 - UPSC CSE 2023



Nausheen
AIR 9 - UPSC CSE 2023



Aishwaryam Prajapati
AIR 10 - UPSC CSE 2023



Medha Anand
AIR 13 - UPSC CSE 2023



Kunal Rastogi
AIR 15 - UPSC CSE 2023



Ayan Jain
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2 Years

G.S. 2 - Y PCM - Offline

G.S. 2 Year PCM Fledgling
Comprehensive Offline Programme



Classroom

2 Years

Target 2025

G.S. PCM - Offline

G.S. PCM Comprehensive Classroom
Programme



Classroom

11 Months

Target 2025

G.S. PCM - Online

G.S. PCM Comprehensive Online
Programme



Classroom

11 Months

Target 2025

Optional Subject

Optional Subject Programme



Classroom/LIVE-
Online

5
Months

Target 2025

CHENNAI G.S

10-Month PCM G.S Comprehensive
Programme - Chennai Centre



Classroom

10 Months

Target 2025

10-M ACE - Online

ACE College Foundation Programme



LIVE-Online

10 Months

8 Rank Holders in the Top 10 are from Vajiram & Ravi

Fact: Every year, **more than 30%** of the officers selected through UPSC Civil Services Examination are students of Vajiram & Ravi.



Aditya Srivastava

AIR 1 - UPSC CSE 2023



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Aishwaryam Prajapati

AIR 10 - UPSC CSE 2023



Medha Anand

AIR 13 - UPSC CSE 2023



Kunal Rastogi

AIR 15 - UPSC CSE 2023



Ayan Jain

AIR 16 - UPSC CSE 2023



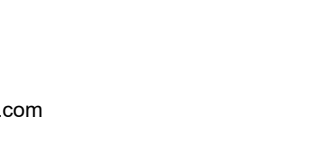
Swati Sharma

AIR 17 - UPSC CSE 2023



Wardah Khan

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Classroom

11 Months

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