

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 572
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 14.12.2018

SPREADING OF FAKE NEWS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

572. SHRI K.C. RAMAMURTHY:

Will the Minister of Electronics & Information Technology be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether the Ministry has observed that fake news in social media, particularly on whatsapp, is spreading like anything;
- (b) whether the Ministry has any guidelines to curb such things or has given any direction to whatsapp to curb fake news on its platform;
- (c) if so, when such instructions have been issued and whether it has yielded positive results; and
- (d) how social media platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, etc., are working with Ministries of communication, Home Affairs, IT and local police to address these and other issues?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA)

(a) to (c): There are media reports about spread of fake news, misinformation/disinformation on Internet particularly using WhatsApp platform. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) took note of this and issued a notice to WhatsApp on 3.7.2018. In their response submitted on the same day, WhatsApp conveyed a number of steps taken by them to address the issue of fake news propagated using their platform. In particular, they have shared the strategy of “Giving people the controls and information they need to stay safe” and “To work proactively to prevent misuse on WhatsApp”. Subsequently, on 19.7.2018, Government issued second notice to WhatsApp conveying that they need to come out with more effective solutions that can bring in accountability and facilitate enforcement of law in addition to the promised efforts towards labelling forwards and weeding out fake news.

Ministry of Home affairs (MHA) has also issued a number of advisories which includes advisory on untoward incidents in the name of protection of cows dated 09.08.2016, advisory on cyber crime prevention and control dated 13.01.2018 and also an advisory on incidents of lynching by mobs in some States fuelled by rumours of lifting/kidnapping of children dated 04.07.2018. Pursuant to the directions of the Supreme Court’s order dated 17.07.2018 in WP(C) 754/2016, MHA has issued a directive on 23.07.2018 to all States for implementation of directions of the apex court.

(d): Yes, Sir. MeitY and MHA as well as Police are in regular touch with various social media platforms to effectively address the issue of blocking/removal of objectionable content.
