

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3678
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 08.08.2018

CIRCULATION OF FAKE NEWS TO CREATE PANIC

3678 SHRIMATI KIRRON KHER:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken any steps to check the broadcasting of erroneous clips about natural disasters that induce panic, such as the fake clip circulated about Cyclone Okhi destroying Bandra - Worli sealink in Mumbai and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has probed into the origin of these clips or monitored their circulation over social media sites and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether there is any monitoring or evaluation of clips at the source of origin, to examine their validity before they are circulated widely and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to actively dismiss fake clips and to spread information regarding authenticity of clips?

ANSWER

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

(a) and (b): No such incident was reported to Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

(c) and (d): Government is fully committed to freedom of speech and expression and privacy of its citizens as enshrined in the constitution of India. Government does not regulate content appearing on Internet. Law enforcement agencies take appropriate action on posting of malicious content on Internet on specific case-to-case basis.

The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 has provision for removal/ disablement of malicious content appearing on Internet. Section 79 of the Act provides that intermediaries are required to follow due diligence. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2011 notified under this section prescribes that the intermediaries shall observe due diligence while discharging their duties and shall inform the users of computer resources not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that is harmful, objectionable, affect minors or is unlawful in any way.

Further, section 69A of the IT Act empowers Government to block any information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any computer resource in the interest of - (i) sovereignty and integrity of India, (ii) defence of India, (iii) security

of the State, (iv) friendly relations with foreign States, (v) public order, or (vi) for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to above. Towards more effective enforcement, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has been regularly interacting with popular social media sites like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter etc.

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 23.7.2018 to all States for implementation of directions of the apex court and has constituted a Group of Ministers and a High level Committee to make recommendations in this matter.
