

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2382
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 26.12.2018

MISUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

2382. SHRIMATI RAKSHATAI KHADSE:

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to address the challenge of misinformation and pernicious rumours spreading via social media platforms;
- (a) if so, the details thereof; and
- (b) the steps being taken to spread awareness among the users of social media platforms?

ANSWER

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

(a) and (b): The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 has provisions for removal of objectionable online content. Social media platforms are intermediaries as defined in the Act. Section 69A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 empowers Government to block any information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any Computer Resource in the interest of Sovereignty and Integrity of India, Defence of India, Security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to above. Further, Section 79 of the Act provides that intermediaries are required to disable/remove unlawful content on being notified by appropriate government or its agency. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011 notified under section 79 of the IT Act require 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 and unlawful in any way.

Government has taken several steps to address the challenges of misinformation and rumors spreading via social media platforms. These, inter alia, include :

- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) took note of media reports about spread of fake news, misinformation/disinformation on Internet particularly using WhatsApp platform and issued a notice to WhatsApp on 3.7.2018. In their response, WhatsApp conveyed a number of steps taken by them to address the issue of fake news propagated using their platform.
- Ministry of Home affairs (MHA) has 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.
- MeitY and MHA as well as Police are in regular touch with various social media platforms to effectively address the issue of removal of objectionable content.

(c): Government has taken various steps to spread awareness among the users of social media platforms including:

- (i) MeitY through a program, namely, Information Security Education & Awareness (ISEA), has been highlighting the importance of following the ethics while using Internet and advice not to share rumours/fake news. A dedicated website for information security awareness (<https://www.infosecawareness.in>) has also been set up.
- (ii) CERT-In is conducting regular training programmes for network / system administrators and Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) of Government and critical sector organisations regarding

securing the IT infrastructure and mitigating cyber attacks. 22 trainings covering 746 participants conducted in the year 2018 (till November).

- (iii) Government has initiated mass cyber security awareness project. One such project has been implemented in North-Eastern states of Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim targeted towards creating awareness among youth and public including School / College students.
- (iv) MHA has created a Twitter Handle “Cyber Dost” to spread awareness on cyber safety and cyber security. MHA has also published a Handbook for Adolescents/Students on Cyber Safety.
