

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3454
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 02.01.2019

POLICY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

3454. SHRI CHANDRAKANT KHAIRE:

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to formulate any new policy for the social media and its users;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken/ being taken by the Government to curb the increasing number of trolling in various social media platforms along with the spreading of fake news?

ANSWER

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

- (a): There is no such proposal with MeitY at present.
- (b): Does not arise.
- (c): 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 this section require that the intermediaries, which includes social media platforms, 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, 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:

- (i) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) took note of media reports about spread of fake news, misinformation/disinformation on Internet particularly using social media platforms. Social media platforms have implemented a number of steps to address the issue of fake news propagated using their platform.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) 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>) provides all the relevant awareness material.

- (v) 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.
