

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2223
TO BE ANSWERED ON 02.08.2023

ACCOUNTABILITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

2223. SHRI RAMESH CHANDER KAUSHIK:

Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any policy has been framed by the Government to make the social media accountable and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the action taken by the Government against the erring social media operating companies so far; and
- (c) the number of persons whose social media accounts have been suspended during the last year?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR)

(a) and (b):The Government's objectives are to ensure an Open, Safe &Trusted and Accountable Internet for Digital Nagrik or citizens.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules, 2021"), together, has created a framework for all intermediaries in particular significant social media intermediaries vis-a-vis objective of safety & trust and accountability on the internet for all Indian users. To ensure this, the Central Government, in exercise of the power under IT Act has notified the IT Rules, 2021. These new rules cast specific obligation on intermediaries vis-à-vis what kind of information is to be hosted, displayed, uploaded, published, transmitted, stored or shared. Intermediaries are also required to remove any content violative of any law for the time

being in force as and when brought to their knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by appropriate government or its authorised agency. In case of failure to follow diligence as provided in the IT Rules, 2021, by intermediaries, they shall lose their exemption from liability under section 79 of the IT Act and shall be liable for consequential action as provided in such law. Further, in case an intermediary is a significant social media intermediary (an intermediary having more than 50 lakh registered users in India), to additionally observe due diligence in terms of appointing, in India, a Grievance Officer, a Chief Compliance Officer and a nodal contact person for 24x7 coordination with law enforcement agencies. As per the IT Rules, 2021, the Chief Compliance Officer is responsible for ensuring compliance with the IT Act and the rules made thereunder.

Keeping in view complaints regarding action or inaction, on the part of the social media intermediaries and other intermediaries on user grievances regarding objectionable content or suspension of their accounts, the Central Government has also established three Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs), as provided for in the said IT Rules, 2021 to enable users to appeal against the decisions taken by Grievance Officer of intermediaries on user complaints.

(c): Section 69A of the IT Act and the rules made thereunder empowers Government to issue direction for blocking of access by the public any information generated, transmitted, received

, stored or hosted in any computer resource if it is necessary or expedient to do so 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. For blocking of information under section 69A, the Government follows the process prescribed under the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information for Public) Rules, 2009. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology issued directions under section 69A of the IT Act for blocking a total of 6,775 Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) in the year 2022, which include URLs for webpages, websites and content and accounts on social media platforms.
