

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3341
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.08.2023

THREAT OF FOREIGN MOBILE APPLICATIONS

3341. SHRI SANJAY SETH:

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

- (a) whether many foreign mobile applications pose the national security as well as the privacy threat to the citizens of India;
- (b) if so, the action taken by the Government in this regard;
- (c) the total number of foreign mobile applications banned in India during the last three years; and
- (d) the types of privacy threat posed by these foreign mobile applications to Indian citizens?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): The policies of the Government are aimed at ensuring a Safe & Trusted and Accountable Internet for its all users.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 (“IT Act”) and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, together, has put a stringent framework to ensure that Indian cyberspace is safe & trusted and also casts obligations on the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence as per rule 3(1)(b). In case of failure to follow diligence as provided in the IT Rules, 2021, by intermediaries, they shall lose their safe harbour protection under section 79 of the IT Act and shall be liable for consequential action as provided in such law. Such due diligence includes that intermediary shall make reasonable efforts by itself, and to cause the users of its computer resource to not host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, store, update or share any information that threatens the unity, integrity, defence, security or sovereignty of India, friendly relations with foreign States, or public order, or causes incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence, or prevents investigation of any offence, or is insulting other nation or which violates any law.

Section 69A of the IT Act and the rules made thereunder provide power to the Central Government to issue directions 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, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for inciting cognizable offence relating to above. Following the procedures and safeguards prescribed under the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009, the Central Government issues directions for blocking after receiving the request from the nodal officer of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Law Enforcement Agencies who, after analyzing suspicious applications based on the complaints, received from various sources, send such request to the Designated Officer in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under section 69A of the IT Act.

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has identified 545 mobile applications which were collecting users' information and transmitting it in an unauthorized manner to servers located outside the country for profiling. Based on the request from MHA, MeitY has issued direction for blocking of those 545 mobile applications since such data transmissions infringes the sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India and security of the State.
