GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 322
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 03-02-2021

REGULATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

322. SHRIMATI RAKSHA NIKHIL KHADSE:

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

(a) whether the Government proposes to regulate digital social Media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, etc. and if so, the details thereof; and

(b) the steps taken by the Government to prevent the misuse of these social media platforms and other news media platforms and ensure the digital safety of users especially women?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI SANJAY DHOTRE)

(a): The social media platforms are intermediaries as defined in the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000 and the (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules 2011 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, inter alia, grossly harmful, harassing, defamatory, libelous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful, or racially, ethnically objectionable, disparaging, or otherwise unlawful in any manner. They are also expected to remove any unlawful content relatable to Article 19(2) of the Constitution of India as and when brought to their knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by appropriate government or its agency or directed under section 69A of the IT Act, 2000.

(b): Government has taken several steps to prevent the misuse of social media platforms and other news media platforms and to ensure the digital safety of users especially women. These, inter alia, include:

(i)   The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 has provisions to deal with cyber crime against children. Sections 66E, 67, 67A and 67B of the Act provides stringent punishment for publishing, browsing or transmitting of obscene, sexually explicit and child pornography in electronic form. Further, sections 354A and 354D of Indian Penal Code, 1860 provide punishment for cyber bullying and cyber stalking.

(ii)   Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) operates a National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, www.cybercrime.gov.in to enable citizens to online report complaints pertaining to all types of cyber crimes with special focus on cyber crimes against women and children. Complaints reported on this portal are attended by the respective Law Enforcement Authorities of States. A nation-wide helpline number [155260] is also made functional to

help public in filing complaints through the portal. MHA has also 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.

(iii)   Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and Ministry of Home Affairs (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 regularly interacts with social media platforms on issues related to spread of fake news, misinformation/disinformation on Internet. Social media platforms have implemented a number of steps to address the issue of fake news propagated using their platform.

(v)   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 fueled by rumors of lifting/kidnapping of children dated 04.07.2018.

(vi)   MeitY through a program, namely, Information Security Education & Awareness (ISEA), has been creating awareness among users highlighting the importance of following the ethics while using Internet and advising them not to share rumors/fake news. A dedicated website for information security awareness (https://www.infosecawareness.in) provides relevant awareness material. Under the progamme, 21 awareness workshops on Information Security exclusively for women have been organized covering 2,083 participants. The topics/content covered in these workshops includes cyber security, cyber stalking, online shopping, social media and privacy, password management, internet security, mobile security, browser security, online banking, instant messaging, etc. Besides this, an exclusive handbook namely 'Information Security Awareness handbook for Women', 'Cyber Security tips for Women' and 'Online Safety tips for Women@Home during COVID 19' have been designed. The awareness content designed/developed exclusively for women have been made available for download on the *website* https://www.infosecawareness.in/women.

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