

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1199
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 09.02.2022

TEK FOGG AND WHATSAPP

1199.DR. A. CHELLAKUMAR:
MS. S. JOTHIMANI:

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

- (a) whether the Government is considering to take action against Tek Fogg app which allows operatives to hack into and take over Whatsapp accounts of private citizens;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Government is considering to investigate how personal information of targeted Whatsapp users has been phished by Tek Fogg and utilised as part of harassment campaigns;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, reasons therefor;
- (e) whether the Government is planning to protect citizens from the threats of identity theft and potential legal liability for criminal cases emanating from their hacked phone numbers;
- (f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (g) whether the Government is considering to investigate alleged links between two private companies, Persistent Systems and Mohalla Tech Pvt. Ltd. in regard to the apps implications on national security; and
- (h) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d), (g) and (h): Government has noted the news articles about an App, namely, 'Tek Fog' that has been allegedly used to manipulate social media platforms. This Ministry has searched the App on prominent App Stores and APK Stores and could not find the so called App in any of these online stores. This Ministry is not aware of any technical vulnerability that makes social media intermediaries susceptible to manipulation as reported in the news articles.

(e) and (f): The Government is committed to ensure that the Internet in India is Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable for all users. As internet expands and delivers many benefits for citizens, the Government is also aware of growing phenomena of users harms caused by misuse of some social media intermediaries/ platforms by some users which also includes cybercrimes related to identity theft.

The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 has adequate provisions to deal with such cyber crimes, where sections 66C and 66D of the IT Act specifically provide punishment for identity theft and for

cheating by personation by using computer resource, respectively. In addition, any hacking or suspected hacking attempt can also be reported to Indian Computer Emergency Response Team.

Rule 3(2)(b) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 also provides for immediate removal of any imagery which is in the nature of impersonation in an electronic form from an Intermediary platform.
