

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4546
TO BE ANSWERED ON 30.03.2022

FAKE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

4546. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH:

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

- (a) whether the Government has formulated any plan to combat misleading information, messages contents and advertisements being spread through fake social media accounts and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government proposes to enact any separate law to prosecute criminal cases against the mongers, fraudsters and people spreading fake news through social media platforms;
- (c) if so, the details thereof along with the time by which the said law is likely to be enacted; and
- (d) the State-wise details of the data related to criminal cases registered in this regard along with the actions taken thereon during the last two years?

ANSWER

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

(a):The Government is committed to Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable internet. The Government is aware of the risk and danger posed by growing phenomena of fake news and dissemination of wrong information through various social media platforms. Cyberspace has the unique characteristics of being virtual, borderless and anonymous. Anyone can post, share, communicate any message from anywhere across the world at any time. This makes it challenging to identify and stop spread of misleading information and fake news on social media.

The Government has taken several steps to address the challenges of misinformation and rumours spreading via various online media platforms including social media, news channels and other online portals. These, inter alia, include:

- (i) The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules, 2021) under the Information Technology Act (IT Act), 2000 published on 25th February, 2021 require that the intermediaries follow certain due diligence as prescribed. They are required to publish privacy policy and terms of use of

their platform. They are required to inform their users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that is harmful, objectionable, and unlawful in any way. They are also required to remove any unlawful content related to Article 19(2) of the Constitution of India or violative of any law, as and when brought to their knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by appropriate government or its agency. The Rules also require that publishers of online news observe the Code of Ethics which includes adherence to:

- Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India under the Press Council Act, 1978;
 - Programme Code under section 5 of the Cable Television Networks Regulation) Act, 1995;
 - Content which is prohibited under any law for the time being in force shall not be published or transmitted.
- (ii) As per rule 4(2) of the above said Rules, a Significant Social Media Intermediary (SSMI) primarily providing messaging service are required to identify the first originator of the information for the purposes of prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution or punishment of an offence related to the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, or public order, or of incitement to an offence relating to the above, or in relation with rape, sexually explicit material or child sexual abuse material based on notice from lawful agencies or on the orders of the court.
- (iii) Under section 69A of the IT Act, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) does blocking of 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.
- (iv) A Fact Check Unit has been setup under Press Information Bureau of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in November, 2019. This Unit takes cognizance of fake news both suo-motu and by way of queries sent by citizens on its portal or through e-mail and WhatsApp. The Unit responds to the relevant queries with correct information when the same pertains to Central Government or forwards them to States/UTs in other cases. The Unit also maintain social media accounts and posts cases of fake news, being busted, on the same on regular basis. The Fact Check Unit of PIB covers news on various media platforms, including electronic media.
- (v) 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 rumours/fake news. A dedicated

website for information security awareness (<https://www.infosecawareness.in>) provides all the relevant awareness material.

- (vi) MeitY regularly interacts with popular social media intermediaries and issues advisories from time to time including advisories issued in March, 2020 and in May, 2021 to curb availability of fake news related to Covid-19.

(b) and (c): There is no such proposal under active consideration of this Ministry.

(d): As per data maintained by the National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB), a total of 190 and 578 cases of fake news on social media were registered during the year 2019 and 2020 respectively. Latest data pertains to the year 2020. The State-wise details is placed at Annexure-I

Annexure-I

Cases of fake news on social media in 2020

SL	State/UT	Fake News on Social Media (Sec.505)
STATES:		
1	Andhra Pradesh	106
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0
3	Assam	0
4	Bihar	5
5	Chhattisgarh	1
6	Goa	0
7	Gujarat	12
8	Haryana	3
9	Himachal Pradesh	1
10	Jharkhand	0
11	Karnataka	0
12	Kerala	0
13	Madhya Pradesh	10
14	Maharashtra	29
15	Manipur	14
16	Meghalaya	9
17	Mizoram	0
18	Nagaland	0
19	Odisha	0
20	Punjab	0
21	Rajasthan	7
22	Sikkim	0
23	Tamil Nadu	64
24	Telangana	135
25	Tripura	0
26	Uttar Pradesh	109
27	Uttarakhand	0
28	West Bengal	58
TOTAL STATE(S)		563
UNION TERRITORIES:		
29	A&N Islands	0
30	Chandigarh	0
31	D&N Haveli and Daman & Diu	0
32	Delhi	0
33	Jammu & Kashmir	15
34	Ladakh	0
35	Lakshadweep	0

36	Puducherry	0
TOTAL UT(S)		15
TOTAL ALL INDIA		578
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per data provided by States/UTs • States/UTs may not be compared purely on the basis of crime figures 		

Cases of fake news on social media in 2019

S. No	State/UT	Fake News on Social Media (Sec.505)
STATES:		
1	Andhra Pradesh	36
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0
3	Assam	22
4	Bihar	0
5	Chhattisgarh	1
6	Goa	0
7	Gujarat	5
8	Haryana	0
9	Himachal Pradesh	0
10	Jammu & Kashmir	0
11	Jharkhand	0
12	Karnataka	0
13	Kerala	13
14	Madhya Pradesh	8
15	Maharashtra	3
16	Manipur	0
17	Meghalaya	0
18	Mizoram	0
19	Nagaland	0
20	Odisha	0
21	Punjab	0
22	Rajasthan	4
23	Sikkim	0
24	Tamil Nadu	41
25	Telangana	19
26	Tripura	0
27	Uttar Pradesh	32
28	Uttarakhand	0

29	West Bengal	6
	TOTAL STATE(S)	190
	UNION TERRITORIES:	
30	A&N Islands	0
31	Chandigarh	0
32	D&N Haveli	0
33	Daman & Diu	0
34	Delhi	0
35	Lakshadweep	0
36	Puducherry	0
	TOTAL UT(S)	0
	TOTAL ALL INDIA	190
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per data provided by States/UTs • Due to non-receipt of data from West Bengal in time for 2019, Data furnished for 2018 has been used 		

