

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2591
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.12.2024

STALKING OF WOMEN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

2591. DR. BYREDDY SHABARI:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any steps are being taken by the Government to prevent circulation of fake news across the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Digital Data Protection Act has completely enforced across the country and if so, the steps taken by the Government to protect privacy of social media users; and
- (c) whether there is a rising trend of online stalking of women on social media platforms and if so, the steps taken by the Government to protect women's dignity on social media platforms?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND
PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
(DR. L. MURUGAN)

(a): The Government takes all possible actions to control the spread of fake and misleading information which has potential to adversely affect the society at large. In this regard, the Government has statutory and institutional mechanisms in place to address fake news on various media platforms.

For Print Media, the newspapers have to adhere to “Norms of Journalistic Conduct” brought out by Press Council of India (PCI) which, inter alia, restrains publication of fake/defamatory/ misleading news. The Council holds inquiry into alleged violations of Norms, as per section 14 of the Act, and may warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, editors, journalists, etc. as the case may be.

Content on private satellite TV channels is required to adhere to the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, which, inter alia, provides that no content which contains anything obscene, defamatory, deliberate, false and suggestive innuendos and half-truths is broadcast on private satellite TV channels. Cable Television Network (Amendment) Rules 2021, provides for a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism to look into the complaints relating to the violation of the Code by the TV channels. Appropriate action is taken where violation of Programme Code is found.

For the content of publishers and news and current affairs on digital media, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules, 2021) prescribes a Code of Ethics which, inter-alia, requires them to adhere to the Norms of Journalistic Conduct and Programme Code.

A Fact Check Unit (FCU) has been set up under Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in November, 2019 to check fake news relating to the Central Government. After verifying the authenticity of news from authorised sources in Ministries/ Departments in the Government of India, FCU posts correct information on its social media platforms.

(b): The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 ('DPDP Act') has been notified on 11th August, 2023 to provide for the processing of digital personal data in a manner that recognises both the right of individuals to protect their personal data and the need to process such personal data for lawful purposes.

(c): Incidents of misuse of social media to commit cyber crimes including online abuse and stalking of women are reported under Section 78 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. "Police" and "Public Order" are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The State Governments/ Union Territories deal with reported cases of misuse of social media to commit cyber crimes. Ministry of Home Affairs is also implementing a scheme namely 'Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC)' under which an online cybercrime reporting portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) has been launched in September, 2018 to enable public to report complaints pertaining to Child - Pornography/Child Sexual Abuse Material, rape/gang-rape imagery or sexually explicit content. The Portal facilitates the States/UTs to view complaints of cyber crime online and take appropriate action.
