

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2693
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.12.2024

MENACE OF FAKE NEWS

2693. SHRI TEJASVI SURYA:
SHRI DARSHAN SINGH CHOUDHARY:
SHRI KULDEEP INDORA:
SHRI JAGADISH SHETTAR:

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

- (a) whether the Government has any proposal to develop an effective mechanism to combat fake news affecting adversely the society at large in the country;
- (b) if so, the details for fixing accountability and persuading internet platform to be more careful and responsible;
- (c) whether any steps have been taken by the Government to counter fake news on social media including mandating appointment of ombudsman by social media companies to check fake news and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether the Government has proposed to impose penalty on the persons engaged in propagating false news and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): 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.

For the user generated content on intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, the IT Rules 2021 casts specific obligations on them to make reasonable efforts and to cause the users of their computer resource to not host, store, transmit, display or publish etc. any such information that is categorised as unlawful under IT Rules, 2021 and violative of any law for the time being in force.

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 of Government of India, FCU posts correct information on its social media platforms.
