

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3684
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18.12.2024**

BLOCKING OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA PLATFORMS

3684. SMT. PRATIMA MONDAL:

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

(a) whether the Government has issued confidential notices under Section 69A of the IT Act to block independent media platforms like Bolta Hindustan and National Dastak without providing specific reasons or prior warnings thereby undermining transparency and accountability;

(b) the steps being taken by the Government to ensure that measures under Section 69A are not used to suppress independent journalism and freedom of expression especially during critical times like elections when diverse perspectives are crucial; and

(c) the reasons for which the affected media platforms are denied access to blocking orders or an opportunity for a fair hearing, violating their right to due process and diminishing public trust in democratic governance?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c): The Government has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules, 2021) on 25th February, 2021 under Information Technology Act, 2000. The Rules provide for a Code of Ethics for the publishers of news and current affairs on digital media and publishers of online curated content (OTT platforms).

The publishers of news and current affairs on digital media including YouTube news channels Bolta Hindustan and National Dastak are covered under the provisions of IT Rules, 2021, Part-III of which provides for issuance of directions for blocking of content covered under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act, 2000).

Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000, inter-alia, empowers the Central Government to issue directions to any Government agency or an intermediary to block content 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 such matters. Appropriate directions are issued for blocking of access of such information under IT Rules, 2021 by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

There are sufficient procedural safeguards before exercise of the provision of blocking of content under Section 69A. The concerned content is examined by a Committee having representatives from the Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Women and Child Development, etc. The Committee also has domain experts from Press Council of India, FICCI, and CII. Further, the rules provide for an opportunity to the publisher or the intermediary concerned to appear and submit their reply and clarifications before the Committee.
