

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. *279
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 19.03.2025

ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY

***279. MS IQRA CHOUDHARY:**

Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state: -

- (a) the steps taken by the Government to regulate online pornography given its links to increasing violence against women and exploitation of minors;
- (b) whether the Government is conducting research on the impact of online pornography on gender-based violence in the country;
- (c) the measures put in place to prevent children from accessing harmful pornographic content online including social media apps; and
- (d) whether the Government plans to introduce stricter content moderation and accountability for websites and apps hosting pornography and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN THE REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED
QUESTION NO. 279* FOR 19.03.2025 REGARDING
ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY**

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(a) to (d): The policies of the Central Government are aimed at ensuring an open, safe, trusted and accountable Internet for its users.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 (“IT Act”) provides punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material and material containing sexually explicit act in electronic form. The IT Act also has stringent punishment for publishing or transmitting of material depicting children in sexually explicit act in electronic form.

Also, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (“IT Rules, 2021”) casts obligations on the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence and if they fail to observe such due diligence, they lose the exemption from their liability under law for third-party information or data or communication link hosted by them. Such due diligence includes that in case a significant social media intermediary is providing services primarily in the nature of messaging shall enable the identification of the first originator of the information on its computer resource for the purposes of prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution or punishment of an offence related to rape, sexually explicit material or child sexual abuse material. Such due diligence also includes that intermediaries shall remove within 24 hours any content which prima facie exposes the private area of any individual, shows such individual in full or partial nudity or shows or depicts such individual in any sexual act or conduct. Further, the rules provide for the establishment of one or more Grievance Appellate Committee(s) to allow users to appeal against decisions taken by Grievance Officers of social media intermediary on such complaints.

To ensure a good and healthy entertainment in accordance with the provisions of the Cinematograph Act 1952 and the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules 1983, Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), regulates the public exhibition of films including adult films. According to the guidelines issued by them, films which are considered unsuitable for exhibition to non-adults shall be certified for exhibition to adult audiences only.

Further for online publishers of curated content, the IT Rules, 2021 prescribes the code of ethics publishers of online curated content, commonly known as OTT Platforms. This code requires the OTT Platforms to classify content in specified age-appropriate categories, restrict access of age-inappropriate content by children, and implement an age verification mechanism for content classified as “Adult”.

To further strengthen the mechanism to deal with such cybercrimes in a coordinated manner, the Government has also taken several other measures, including the following:

- (i) The Ministry of Home Affairs operates a National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) to enable citizens to report complaints pertaining to all types of cybercrimes, with special focus on cybercrimes against children. The Ministry has also set up the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) to deal with all types of cybercrime, including cybercrime against children, in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.
- (ii) The Ministry of Home Affairs has provided financial assistance to States and Union territories under the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children Scheme for capacity building, including for the setting up of cyber forensic-cum-training laboratories and training of personnel of law enforcement agencies, public prosecutors and judicial officers.

- (iii) Government has from time to time blocked websites containing child sexual abuse material (CSAM), based on lists from Interpol received through the Central Bureau of Investigation, India's national nodal agency for Interpol.
- (iv) Government has issued an order to Internet Service Providers, directing them to implement Internet Watch Foundation, UK or Project Arachnid, Canada list of CSAM websites/webpages on a dynamic basis and block access to such web pages or websites.
- (v) The Department of Telecommunications has requested Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to spread awareness among their subscribers about the use of parental control filters, and has also directed ISPs with International Long-Distance license to block certain websites found to be containing CSAM.
- (vi) To spread awareness on cybercrime, the Ministry of Home Affairs has taken several steps that include dissemination of messages on cybercrime through the Twitter handle @cyberDost, radio campaigns and publishing of a Handbook for Adolescents/Students.
- (vii) A MoU has been signed between the National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), USA regarding sharing of Tipline reports on online child explicit material and child sexual exploitation contents from NCMEC. The Tip lines, as received from NCMEC, are being shared with States/UTs online through the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal for taking further action.
