

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2867
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 17.12.2025

BAN ON WEBSITES ADVERTISING ONLINE PROSTITUTION

2867. SHRI MATHESWARAN V S:

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

- (a) the details of steps taken by the Government to ban websites which are advertising online prostitution or escort services;
- (b) whether it is a fact that there are many websites publicly advertise adultery contents; and
- (c) the details of websites related to online prostitution/prostitution/escort services which are banned by the Government on the request of State prosecuting agencies from the year 2014 to till date, year-wise?

ANSWER
MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI JITIN PRASADA)

(a) to (c): The policies of the Government aim to ensure an open, safe, trusted and accountable internet. Government of India is committed to keeping the internet in India free from unlawful content, including advertisements related to adultery or prostitution.

Legal framework

Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000

The IT Act and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules, 2021), together, have put in place a stringent framework to deal with unlawful and harmful content in the digital space.

It imposes clear obligations on intermediaries to ensure accountability.

The IT Act provides punishment for various cyber offences such as privacy violations (section 66E), publishing or transmitting obscene or sexually explicit content (sections 67, 67A, 67B).

It also empowers Police to investigate offences (section 78), enter public place and search and arrest suspected person (section 80).

IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021

The IT Rules, 2021 cast due-diligence obligations on intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, and require them to implement these obligations effectively so as to prevent the hosting or transmission of unlawful content.

Key provisions under IT Rules, 2021:

Provision	Details
Restricted information under Rule 3(1)(b)	Restricts hosting, storing, transmitting, displaying or publishing information/content that, among other things, is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• obscene, pornographic, invasive of another's privacy, insulting or harassing on the basis of gender, racially or ethnically objectionable, or promoting hate or violence;• harmful to child;• deceives or misleads, including through deepfakes;• impersonates others, including via Artificial Intelligence;• threatens national security or public order;• violates any applicable law.
User Awareness Obligations	Intermediaries must clearly inform users through terms of service and user agreements about the consequences of sharing unlawful content, including content removal, account suspension, or termination.
Accountability in Content Removal	Intermediaries must act expeditiously to remove unlawful content upon court orders, reasoned intimation from Government, or user grievances, within prescribed timelines.
Grievance Redressal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intermediaries to appoint Grievance Officers• Mandates to resolve complaints through removal of unlawful content within 72 hours.• Content violating privacy, impersonating individuals, or showing nudity must be removed within 24 hours against any such complaint.
Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs) Mechanism	Users can appeal online at www.gac.gov.in if their complaints are not addressed by the intermediaries' Grievance Officers. GACs ensure accountability and transparency of content moderation decisions.

Assistance by Intermediaries to Government Agencies	Intermediaries must provide information under their control or assistance to authorised Government agencies for identity verification, or for the prevention, detection, investigation, or prosecution of offences, including cyber security incidents.
Additional Obligations of significant social media intermediaries (SSMIs) (i.e., social media intermediaries having 50 lakhs or above registered user base in India)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSMIs offering messaging services must help law enforcement trace originators of serious or sensitive content. • SSMIs to use automated tools to detect and limit spread of unlawful content. • SSMIs to publish compliance reports, appoint local officers, and share physical address based in India for compliances and law enforcement coordination. • SSMIs to offer voluntary user verification, internal appeals, and fair hearing before taking suo-moto action.

In case of failure of the intermediaries to observe the legal obligations as provided in the IT Rules, 2021, they lose their exemption from third party information provided under section 79 of the IT Act.

They are liable for consequential action or prosecution as provided under any extant law.

Websites and URLs hosting such unlawful content are taken down based on court orders or requests from appropriate authorities. Blocking of websites is also carried out on a case-to-case basis.

Indecent Representation of Women Act (Prohibition Act), 1986

The Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986 prohibits the depiction of women in an indecent and derogatory manner.

It applies to advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner and prescribes penalties including imprisonment of up to two years.

Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 is the principal legislation addressing offences connected with prostitution.

It criminalises activities such as procuring persons for prostitution, keeping or allowing premises to be used as a brothel, living on the earnings of prostitution, pimping and solicitation.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023

The BNS, 2023 explicitly addresses offences relating to human trafficking, including the sale or purchase of children for prostitution.

It introduces the category of 'organized crime' to effectively target trafficking networks engaged in prostitution-related activities.
