

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1881
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 11.02.2026

**ILLEGAL CIRCULATION AND SALE OF PORNOGRAPHIC CONTENT THROUGH
ENCRYPTED MOBILE APPLICATIONS**

†1881. **SHRI SANJAY HARIBHAU JADHAV:**
SHRI ANIL YESHWANT DESAI:
SHRI OMPRAKASH BHUPALSINH ALIAS PAVAN RAJENIMBALKAR:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware that despite the ban on obscene content in the country, pornographic material is being illegally circulated and sold through Telegram channels, WhatsApp groups and other encrypted mobile applications and if so, the steps taken thereon;
- (b) whether the Government has carried out any assessment of its impact, particularly on adolescents and minors, including addiction, mental health issues and behavioural consequences and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the legal and regulatory provisions currently in force to curb the creation, transmission, sale and monetisation of obscene content through digital platforms and the number of channels, groups, URLs or accounts blocked or taken down during the last three years; and
- (d) the steps proposed or taken by the Government to address pornography addiction among adolescents including awareness campaigns, counselling, digital literacy programmes and strengthening parental control tools and age-appropriate safety measures on digital platforms?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): The policies of the Government are aimed at ensuring an open, safe and trusted and accountable internet for its users, including women and children. The Government is committed to ensure that the internet in India is free from any form of unlawful content or information, particularly which may lead to violence against women and exploitation of minors.

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 identity theft (section 66C), impersonation (section 66D), 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 and 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.
Rule 3(2)(b)	Specifically deals with the 24-hour takedown requirement for non-consensual intimate imagery (NCII) and related content.
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.

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.

An advisory was also issued on 29.12.2025 which clearly advised the intermediaries to observe statutory due diligence obligations under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021, for preventing hosting, publication, transmission, sharing or uploading of vulgar, indecent, obscene, pornographic and other unlawful content on their platforms.

It also advised the intermediaries to undertake an immediate review of their internal compliance frameworks, content moderation practices and user enforcement mechanisms, and to ensure strict and continuous adherence to the provisions of the IT Act and the IT Rules, 2021.

Ministry took note of creation and dissemination of non-consensual intimate imagery on certain social media platforms. Those platforms were directed to immediately cease such services. Government has noted the compliance.

Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023

- The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act) and Rules 2025 provides a legal framework for safeguarding children's privacy online.
- It mandates parental consent for processing children's personal data and prohibits practices detrimental to their well-being such as tracking, behavioural monitoring or targeted advertising towards children.
- It also prohibits processing of personal data which is detrimental to the well-being of children or involves tracking, behavioural monitoring or targeted advertising.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023

- The BNS, 2023 addresses the offences involving online harm, obscenity, misinformation and other cyber-enabled crimes, including those committed through social media platforms against women and children.
- Provides punishment for offences like obscene acts and songs (Section 296), sale of obscene material including display of any such content in electronic form (Section 294).
- Section 353 aims to curb the spread of misinformation and disinformation by penalizing the act of making false or misleading statements, rumours, or reports that can cause public mischief or fear.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

- The POCSO act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years and provides for provisions to safeguard children against sexual abuse and sexual harassment.
- Section 13 criminalises the use of a child in any form of media—whether electronic, printed, or broadcast—for the purpose of sexual gratification.
- Section 14 prescribes punishment of imprisonment for not less than five years and a fine for the first offence. For subsequent convictions, the punishment increases to imprisonment for not less than seven years and a fine.
- Section 15 lays out a graded punishment system for possessing, storing, or failing to report pornographic material involving children.

Cinematograph Act, 1952

The Cinematograph Act, 1952 and the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 1983, Central Board of Film Certification, regulates the public exhibition of films including adult films. According to the guidelines issued by CBFC, films which are considered unsuitable for exhibition to non-adults shall be certified for exhibition to adult audiences only.

Additional measures to strengthen the national response to cybercrimes:

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

- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) operates the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) to enable citizens to report all cybercrimes, with special focus on crimes against children.
- Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) has been established to ensure coordinated and comprehensive action against cybercrime, including child sexual exploitation.
- Financial assistance is provided to States/UTs under the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children Scheme for capacity building, including cyber forensic laboratories and training of police, prosecutors and judicial officers.
- Government periodically blocks websites containing Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) based on inputs from Interpol, routed through the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- Internet Service Providers have been directed to dynamically block CSAM websites using global databases such as the Internet Watch Foundation (UK) and Project Arachnid (Canada).
- ISPs have also been advised to promote parental control filters and block access to identified CSAM websites, including through international gateways.
- Public awareness on cyber safety is promoted through initiatives such as @CyberDost, radio campaigns, and publication of handbooks for students and adolescents.
- MoU between NCRB (MHA) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), USA enables sharing of tipline reports on online child sexual exploitation, which are disseminated to States/UTs through the national portal for prompt action.

25 OTT platforms were banned by the government for airing inappropriate content in 2025.
