

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2977
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.08.2022

MISLEADING NEWS

2977. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH:
SHRI VIVEK NARAYAN SHEJWALKAR:
SHRI KAUSHALENDRA KUMAR:
SHRI SATYADEV PACHAURI:
SHRI DINESH CHANDRA YADAV:

Will the Minister of Electronics and Information Technology be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps taken by the Government to curb misleading news, messages, hateful material and advertisements being spread through fake accounts on social media during the last three years and the current year;
- (b) whether the Government has set up or proposes to set up any system/make law for prosecuting criminal cases against the persons responsible for spreading hatred, doing frauds and spreading fake news through social media;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the steps taken by the Government in regard to objectionable content being spread on every small or big platform and social media; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR)

(a): Government's objectives are aimed at ensuring Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable internet for its users. Government has taken several steps to address the challenges of misinformation via various online media platforms including social media. These, *inter alia*, include:

(i) Government has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules, 2021") under the Information Technology Act (IT Act), 2000. They are required to inform their users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that is harmful, objectionable and unlawful in any way or is patently false and untrue. They are also required to remove any unlawful content violative of any law, as and when brought to their knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by appropriate government or its agency. The Rules also require that publishers of news shall observe the Code of Ethics.

(ii) Under section 69A of the IT Act, Government blocks any information 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 above.

(iii) A Fact Check Unit has been setup under Press Information Bureau of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The Unit responds to the relevant queries / suspected news pertaining to Central Government by labeling it appropriately on its social media handles and its own website.

(b) and (c): Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) operates a National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) to enable citizens to report complaints pertaining to all types of cyber crimes. States/UTs are primarily responsible for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of crimes through their Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs). The Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) at Centre and States take appropriate legal action as per provisions of law and when appropriate.

(d) and (e): The IT Act, 2000 provides for a criminal penalty for publishing or transmitting objectionable content including obscene and sexually explicit content. The IT Rules, 2021 also have provisions to deal with such user harms/ menace. As per provisions of rule 3(2)(b), the intermediary shall remove any such objectionable content against women within twenty-four hours from the receipt of complaint made by the impacted individual or any person on her behalf. The Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) at Centre and States take appropriate legal action as per provisions of law and when appropriate and request intermediaries including social media intermediaries to remove content violative of any law.
