

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION 413
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.02.2022

ACTION AGAINST TEK FOG APP

413. DR. L. HANUMANTHAIAH:
SHRI SYED NASIR HUSSAIN:
SMT. PHULO DEVI NETAM:

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

- (a) whether Government has or intends to take action against Tek Fog App which allows operatives to hack into and take over WhatsApp accounts of private citizens;
- (b) if so, details thereof, if not, reasons therefor;
- (c) whether Government has or intends to investigate how personal information of targeted WhatsApp users has been phished by Tek Fog App and utilised as part of harassment campaigns;
- (d) if so, details thereof, if not, reasons therefor; and
- (e) details of how Government intends to protect citizens from the threats of identity theft and potential legal liability for criminal cases emanating from their hacked phone numbers?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): Government has noted the news articles about the alleged App, namely, 'Tek Fog' that has been used to manipulate social media platforms. This Ministry has tried to locate the App on prominent App Stores and APK Stores and could not find the App in any of these online stores. This Ministry is not aware of any technical vulnerability that makes social media intermediaries susceptible to manipulation as reported in the news articles.

(e): The Government is committed to ensure that the Internet in India is Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable for all users. As internet expands there are many benefits experienced by the citizens. Government is well aware of growing phenomena of users harms caused by misuse of various social media platforms/intermediaries by some users which also includes cyber crimes related to identity theft. The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 has adequate provisions to deal with any such cyber crimes, where sections 66C and 66D of the Act specifically provide punishment for identity theft and for cheating by personation by using computer resource, respectively. In addition, any hacking or suspected hacking attempt can also be reported to Indian Computer Emergency Response Team.

Rule 3(2)b of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 also provides for immediate removal of any imagery which is in the nature of impersonation in an electronic form from an Intermediary platform.
