

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2705
TO BE ANSWERED ON 10-03-2021

FAKE AND MANIPULATED NEWS

2705. SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of an increase in broadcast of fake news in the country inciting animosity in the society;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto along with the steps taken by the Government in this regard;
- (c) whether the Government has taken note of various youtube channels claiming themselves to be news organisation, disseminating fake and manipulated news and if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto along with the action taken by the Government against such channels and youtube platform?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI
SANJAY DHOTRE)

(a) to (c): Cyber space is a complex environment of people, software, hardware and services on the Internet. With a borderless cyberspace coupled with the possibility of instant communication and anonymity, the potential for misuse of cyberspace and social media platforms for criminal activities is a global issue. There are media reports about social media platforms being misused to spread rumours and fake news.

The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 has provisions for removal of objectionable online content. Social media platforms are intermediaries as defined in the Act. Section 79 of the Act provides that intermediaries are required to disable/remove unlawful content on being notified by appropriate government or its agency. In order to provide enhanced user safety as also accountability of digital media platforms, Government has released the new Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 notified under the Act. These Rules require that the intermediaries, which includes social media platforms, shall observe due diligence while discharging their duties and shall inform the users of computer resources not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that is harmful, objectionable, and unlawful in any way. The Rules also require additional due diligence to be observed by intermediaries like YouTube in relation to those entities who publish news and current affairs content on their platform. The Rules further require that publishers of news and current affairs shall observe the Code of Ethics which includes adherence to:

- (i) Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India under the Press Council Act, 1978;
- (ii) Programme Code under section 5 of the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act, 1995;
- (iii) Content which is prohibited under any law for the time being in force shall not be published or transmitted

Further, section 69A of the IT Act, 2000 empowers Government to block any information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any computer resource 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.
