

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 393
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04-02-2021

HATE SPEECH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

393 SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL:

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

- (a) whether Government propose to seek any report from Facebook India regarding their reported inaction on certain posts despite violations of Facebook's policies against incitement to violence, hate speech and misinformation;
- (a) if not, the reasons therefor;
- (b) whether Government has taken any measures to curtail incitement to violence, hate speech and misinformation through various social media platforms; and
- (c) the details of independent mechanism Government has or intends to implement to check the misinformation?

ANSWER

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

(a) and (b): Government has taken note of media report published in Wall Street Journal entitled "Facebook's hate-speech Rules collide with Indian politics, thereby trying to bias the democratic system of the country". Minister for Electronics & Information Technology, on 1.9.2020, has written to CEO, Facebook about alleged bias of the platform and to ensure integrity and neutrality of the Facebook. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology has already taken up the matter with Facebook.

(c) and (d): Facebook is an intermediary for third party content posted on its platform and has to follow due diligence prescribed in the Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules, 2011 notified under section 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000. It is expected to inform the users of Facebook not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that is harmful, objectionable, and unlawful in any way. Also, section 79 of the Act provides that intermediaries are required to disable/remove unlawful content relatable to Article 19(2) of the Constitution on being notified either through a court order or by appropriate government or its agency.

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.

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has set up a dedicated cell (Counter Misinformation Unit) under Press Information Bureau (PIB) as a measure to counter fake news on policies, schemes, programs etc. by Government of India. The Unit has a presence on prominent social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The information is also available on <https://pib.gov.in/factcheck.aspx>. The unit takes suo moto cognizance of fake news going viral on social media and also on basis of outside complaints.
