

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2815**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 10.08.2018

**RESPONSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES ON FAKE  
NEWS ON THEIR PLATFORMS**

**2815      SHRI SANJAY SETH:**

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that fake news and clips are being loaded on social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government has approached these social media platforms in this regard;
- (d) if so, the response of social media companies; and
- (e) the corrective measures taken by these companies?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA)

(a) to (d): There are media reports about availability of fake news and clips on social media platforms including on WhatsApp. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) took note of this and issued a notice to WhatsApp on 03.07.2018. In their response submitted on the same day, WhatsApp has conveyed a number of steps taken by them to address the issue of fake news propagated using their platform. In particular, they have shared the strategy of “Giving people the controls and information they need to stay safe” and “To work proactively to prevent misuse on WhatsApp”. Subsequently on 19.7.2018, Government issued second notice to WhatsApp conveying that they need to come out with more effective solutions that can bring in accountability and facilitate enforcement of law in addition to the promised efforts towards labelling forwards and weeding out fake news.

(e): In response to Government letters, WhatsApp has indicated to take following steps:

- (i) Increase the friction in propagation of content on the platform by reducing the number of forwards to five and by indicating whether an incoming message is either forwarded or originally composed by the sender.
- (ii) They have also planned to remove the forward button that appears adjacent to the video or audio message.
- (iii) WhatsApp is testing a new label in India that highlights when a message has been forwarded versus composed by the sender. This could serve as an important signal for recipients to think twice before forwarding messages because it lets a user know if content they received was written by the person they know or a potential rumour from someone else
- (iv) WhatsApp will be bringing in fact-checking and fake news verification mechanisms to help people check the veracity of content on the platform.
- (v) Work with leading academic experts in India to learn more about the spread of misinformation, which will help inform additional product improvements going forward – as well as help our efforts to block bad actors going forward.

- (vi) WhatsApp has also shared learning material which has been suitably modified and is made available on [www.infosecawareness.in](http://www.infosecawareness.in).

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