

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2853**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 10.07.2019

**MONITORING OF SOCIAL MEDIA USERS**

**2853. SHRI P. PAVEENDRANATH KUMAR:**

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

- (a) whether the Government has instituted any mechanism to monitor social media users who are indulging in spreading rumours with the intention of creating unrest among communities;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the total number of reported cases registered by the Government during each of the last three years, State/UT-wise; and
- (c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to prevent such kind of activities in future?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) and (b): 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 circulation of misinformation and malicious content is a global issue. Government is committed to freedom of speech and expression and privacy of its citizens as enshrined in the constitution of India.

Government does not monitor content appearing on internet. Moreover, 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects as per the Constitution of India and States are primarily responsible for prevention, detection and investigation of cybercrimes through their law enforcement machinery. The Law Enforcement Agencies take legal action against the cyber-crime offenders as per the provisions of applicable laws.

The social media sites are Intermediaries under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. The IT Act has provisions for removal of objectionable online content. Section 79 of the Act and The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011 require that the Intermediaries 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, *inter alia*, grossly harmful, harassing, defamatory, libellous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful, or racially, ethnically objectionable, disparaging, or otherwise unlawful in any manner. They are also expected to remove any unlawful activity relating to Article 19(2) of the Constitution of India as and when brought to their knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by appropriate government or its agency.

(c): Government has taken several steps to address the challenges of rumors spreading via social media platforms with the intention of creating unrest among communities. These, *inter alia*, include:

- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) took note of media reports about spread of fake news, misinformation/disinformation on Internet particularly using WhatsApp platform and issued a notice to WhatsApp on 3.7.2018. In their response, WhatsApp conveyed a number of steps taken by them to address the issue of fake news propagated using their platform.
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued a number of advisories which includes advisory on untoward incidents in the name of protection of cows dated 09.08.2016, advisory on cyber crime prevention and control dated 13.01.2018 and also an advisory on incidents of lynching by mobs in some States fueled by rumors of lifting/kidnapping of children dated 04.07.2018.

- MeitY and MHA as well as Police are in regular touch with various social media platforms to effectively address the issue of removal of objectionable content.
- MeitY through a program, namely, Information Security Education & Awareness (ISEA), has been highlighting the importance of following the ethics while using Internet and advice not to share rumours/fake news. A dedicated website for information security awareness (<https://www.infosecawareness.in>) has also been set up where a module on fake news have been provided.

\*\*\*\*\*