

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION 586
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.07.2022

REGIME FOR SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES

586. SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI:

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

- (a) whether the Government in February 2021 came out with new accountable regime for social media companies through updated IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital media Ethics Code) Rule 2021;
- (b) if so, whether these rules are not sufficient to keep a check on the unlawful, inflammatory and illegal content and conversation on such platform;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to enhance the accountability for social media companies by amending IT laws; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken or being taken by the Government to ensure that right of expression is not hampered by amending the IT rules of social media?

ANSWER

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

(a): All the policies of the Government are aimed at ensuring Open, Safe&Trusted and Accountable internet for its users. The Government has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Codes) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules, 2021") on 25thFebruary, 2021 to make intermediaries including social media platforms accountable to their users and enhance user safety online. These new Rules overhauled the then existing framework for intermediaries and introduced certain obligations to make them more accountable to the citizens and the government and also being transparent in their services to the users.

(b): As per the IT Rules, 2021, the online intermediaries including Social media intermediaries have been mandated to develop a robust grievance redressal system for their users. They are required to publish privacy policy, rules and regulations and terms and conditions. They are also expected to remove any unlawful content as and when brought to their knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by appropriate government or its authorized agency. They are also expected to act on any information violative of their policies as and when it comes to their knowledge.

(c): Government policies and rulemaking are committed to ensure an Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable Internet for its users. As the Internet access continues to rapidly expand in India, new issues related to the above commitments also keep emerging. As the digital eco-system continues to evolve at a fast pace, new challenges are being emerging in the cyber-space every day. To deal with such new and emerging issues, as well as to keep pace with the evolving cyber space, the Government has proposed to further update the part-II of the IT Rules, 2021.

(d): Freedom of speech and expression is a constitutionally guaranteed right under Article 19(1). Neither the Information Technology (IT) Act nor the above said Rules contravene any of these rights.
