

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**STARRED QUESTION NO. \*113**  
**TO BE ANSWERED ON: 11.02.2021**

**REPORT ON MEDIA MANIPULATION SURVEY**

**\*113 SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR GUPTA:**

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

- (a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a report about media manipulation survey from University of Oxford Institute stating that social media manipulation of public opinion is a growing threat to democracies, including that of India;
- (b) the steps that are being taken to ensure that people are able to rely on trustworthy information about Government policies and activities; and
- (c) the steps being taken to save people from becoming target of disinformation and misinformation campaigns launched by some of the neighbouring countries?

**ANSWER**

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

- (a) to (c): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION  
NO. \*113 FOR 11-02-2021 REGARDING REPORT ON MEDIA MANIPULATION SURVEY**

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(a): There had been media reports that Oxford University has published a survey report entitled “Industrialized Disinformation 2020 : Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation”. The report highlights the recent trends of computational propaganda across 81 countries and the evolving tools, capacities, strategies, and resources used to manipulate public opinion around the globe.

(b) and (c): Government has taken several steps to ensure about trustworthy information about Government policies and activities and safeguard people from becoming target of disinformation and misinformation campaigns, These, *inter alia*, include :

(i) Government has set up a portal **india.gov.in** to disseminate trustworthy Government policies and activities. The Portal provides a single window access to the information and services being provided by the Indian Government for citizens and other stakeholders. The Portal endeavours to provide comprehensive, accurate, reliable and one-stop source of information about India and its various facets and links to other Indian Government Portals/websites, which are also working on “gov.in” domain.

(ii) Government actively participated in a Committee specially constituted by Election Commission of India to address the issue of misuse of digital and social media in particularly for the last general election campaign in 2019. Based on the recommendations of the Committee, the Election Commission has worked closely with the industry. A code of commitment was developed. Both Election Commission and social media platforms worked as per the code of commitment for speedy removal of any objectionable or unlawful content.

(iii) 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 unit takes *suo moto* cognizance of fake news going viral on social media and also on basis of outside complaints.

(iv) Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) as well as Police are in regular touch with various social media platforms to effectively address the issue of removal of objectionable content.

(v) Ministry of Home affairs (MHA) and MeitY 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, advisory on incidents of lynching by mobs in some States fueled by rumors of lifting/kidnapping of children dated 04.07.2018, advisory. MeitY on 20.03.2020 issued an advisory to major social media platforms urging them to:

- initiate awareness campaign on their platforms for the users not to upload/circulate any false news/misinformation concerning corona virus which are likely to create panic among public and disturb the public order and social tranquility;
- take immediate action to disable /remove such content hosted on their platforms on priority basis;
- promote dissemination of authentic information related to corona virus as far as possible.

(vi) MeitY regularly interacts with social media platforms on issues related to spread of fake news, misinformation/disinformation on Internet. Government takes appropriate action as per law against the non-compliance by social media platforms. Social media platforms have implemented a number of steps to address the issue of fake news propagated using their platform.

(vii) 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.

(viii) MeitY through a program, namely, Information Security Education & Awareness (ISEA), has been creating awareness among users highlighting the importance of following the ethics while using Internet and advising them not to share rumors/fake news. A dedicated website for information security awareness (<https://www.infosecawareness.in>) provides relevant awareness material.

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