

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2470
TO BE ANSWERED ON 16.03.2022

AUTOMATION OF TEK FOGG

2470. SHRI ABHISHEK BANERJEE:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware that the Tek Fog application is capable of auto-tweeting and auto-sharing tweets and posts of individuals to create artificial trends on Twitter and;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has investigated as to how many of the above said trends have been engineered between 2020 and 2022;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (e) whether the Government is aware that these artificial trends have been tactically deployed around elections to falsely influence narratives; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof;
- (g) whether the Government recognises the need to investigate this unethical tampering of public sentiment; and
- (h) if so, the details of the investigation and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): Government has noted the news articles about an App, namely, 'Tek Fog' that has been allegedly used to manipulate social media platforms. The said App is not present at any of the prominent online App Stores and APK stores. No technical vulnerability that makes social media intermediaries susceptible to manipulation as reported in the news articles have been reported to or observed by this Ministry.

(e) to (h): Government is committed to Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable Internet for users. Government is aware of the risk and danger posed by growing phenomena of dissemination of wrong and hateful information through some social media platforms. This Ministry does not track and monitor Apps or content appearing on social media platforms.

Government has taken several steps to address the challenges of user harms and hateful information available on social media intermediaries/ platform. These, *inter alia*, include:

- (i) In order to ensure accountability of social media platforms to users and enhanced user safety, Government, on 25.02.2021, has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. These Rules require that the intermediaries follow certain due diligence as prescribed. The said Rules provide for removal of any information/ application violative of any extant law, as and when notified by an appropriate government or its authorized agency.

- (ii) 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. Blocking is done as per the process specified in the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information By Public) Rules, 2009 notified under this section.
- (iii) Further Police and Public Order are a State Subject. The Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) at Centre and States take appropriate legal action as per provisions of law against the cyber crime offenders.
