

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1595
TO BE ANSWERED ON 28.07.2021

CURB ON RUMOURS, ILLEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS AND FAKE NEWS

1595 SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH:

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to take concrete steps to curb spread of rumours, illegal advertisements and fake news on various media;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has formulated any scheme to set up a monitoring mechanism in this regard, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to ensure availability of authentic data and facts; and
- (a) the steps taken by the Government to ensure data security of informations of citizens of the country?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): Government has taken several steps to address the challenges of rumours, illegal advertisements and fake news. These, inter alia, include:

- (i) The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 notified on 25th February 2021 ensures that the intermediaries are held accountable to users, including but not limited to, rumors or fake news on their platform.
- (ii) Intermediaries including social media platforms are required to disable/remove unlawful content on being notified by the Appropriate Government or its authorised agency.
- (iii) The said Rules also provide for due diligence to be followed by publishers of online curated content and online news and current affairs service provider. They are required to follow: (i) Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India under the Press Council Act, 1978 and (ii) Programme Code under section 5 of the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.
- (iv) Further in exceptional circumstances, 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.
- (v) 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. The Unit has a presence on prominent social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The information is also available on <https://pib.gov.in/factcheck.aspx>.

- (vi) The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) issues alerts and advisories regarding latest cyber threats/vulnerabilities and countermeasures to protect computers, mobile phones, networks and data on regular basis. CERT-In has issued 60 advisories for data security and mitigating fraudulent activities for organisations and citizens.
- (vii) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) regularly interacts with social media platforms on issues related to spread of fake news, misinformation/disinformation on Internet including issuing specific advisories.
- (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.

(e): Section 43A and section 72A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 provides for privacy and security of data in digital form. Section 43A of the Act provides for compensation to be paid to the affected users in case of unauthorized access of information and leakage of sensitive personal information respectively. It mandates a 'body corporate' to implement reasonable security practices for protecting sensitive personal information of individuals. Section 72A of the Act provides for punishment in the form of imprisonment upto 3 years and fine for disclosure of information in breach of the lawful contract.

Further, the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 11, 2019 by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. The Bill seeks to provide for the protection of personal data of individuals. The Bill is currently being deliberated by the Joint Parliamentary Committee.
