

Under-valuation of 2G spectrum

1499. SHRI DILIPBHAI PANDYA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether CAG has accused the Telecom Ministry of undervaluing 2G spectrum sold to new players in 2008;
- (b) if so, whether the allotment price was not realistic and the policy failed to address the issue of price discovery of spectrum; and
- (c) if so, the responsibility fixed by Government in this regard and corrective steps now proposed to be taken to fix the wrinkles of spectrum allocation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) Sir, the CAG Report on “Issue of Licences and Allocation of 2G spectrum” by the Department of Telecommunications has been tabled in the Parliament on 16.11.2010.

- (c) This issue is being monitored by the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India.

Spread of hate and extremist views on social media

1500. SHRI TARUN VIJAY: Will the MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) how Government looks at the spread of hate and extremist views on social media;
- (b) whether complaints regarding such messages on social media have been lodged with Government, if so, the details thereof along with the nature of action, if any, taken thereon; and
- (c) whether Government is contemplating to strengthen laws to govern such social media platforms for monitoring and checking hate content thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Cyber space is a complex environment of people, software, hardware and services on the Internet. Cyberspace has distinct and unique characteristics as compared to physical space. The cyberspace is virtual, borderless and offers complete anonymity. In the recent years, web and social media have emerged as one of the important public communication channels. It brings social groups together in one virtual place for interaction in real time. Of late, use of

social media has been seen all over the world as a key tool for engineering psychological manipulation of public and its opinion on issues that affect nation and society. With a borderless cyberspace coupled with the possibility of instant communication and anonymity, the potential for spread of hate and extremist views through the use of social media is higher than ever, posing a threat to harmony and public order.

(b) Government takes prompt action under Section 69A of Information Technology Act, 2000 for blocking of websites/URLs with objectionable contents, whenever requests are received from designated nodal officers or upon Court orders for blocking of websites/URLs. Section 69A of the Information Technology 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.

Government has invoked Section 69A of Information Technology Act, 2000 to block/disable access to certain URLs of social media websites. A total of 13 and 10 and 492 URLs of social media websites were blocked in 2013, 2014 and 2015 (till 30th November, 2015) respectively under Section 69A through the Committee constituted under the rules therein. Further, a total of 533, 432 and 352 URLs of social media websites were blocked in compliance with the directions of the competent Courts of India in 2013, 2014 and 2015 (till 30th November, 2015) respectively. Besides, Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) gets requests for blocking of objectionable content from individuals and Organisations which merely forwards those requests to the concerned websites for appropriate action.

(c) The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2011 under Section 79 of the Information Technology Act requires that the Intermediaries (such as social media) 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 harmful, objectionable and unlawful in any way.

An advisory was issued on August 17, 2012 under Section 79 of Information Technology Act, 2000 and Rules therein to all intermediaries asking them to take necessary action to disable inflammatory and hateful content hosted on their website on priority basis. Government is in regular dialog with intermediaries including social networking sites for effective disablement of such objectionable content.