

**Agency dealing with cyber security threats**

512. SHRI B. LINGAIAH YADAV: Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has signed cooperation pacts with its counterparts in Malaysia, Singapore and Japan for cyber security, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether the CERT-In is the nodal agency responsible for dealing with cyber security threats and the MoU will promote closer cooperation for exchange of knowledge and experience in detection, resolution and prevention of security related incidents between India and the three countries, if so, the details thereof and the work done so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DHOTRE SANJAY SHAMRAO): (a) The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Malaysia, Singapore and Japan on cooperation in the area of cyber security as follows:

- (i) MoU between CERT-In and Cyber Security Malaysia was signed on 23rd November 2015 with a validity period of 2 years.
- (ii) MoU between CERT-In and Singapore Computer Emergency Response Team (SingCERT) was signed on 24th November 2015 with a validity period of 2 years and was extended for a period of 5 years on 1st June 2018 with effect from 24th November 2017.
- (iii) MoU between CERT-In and Japan Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Center (JPCERT/CC) was signed on 7th December, 2015 with a validity period of 5 years.

(b) The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is the nodal agency for responding to cyber security incidents as per provisions of Section 70B of the Information Technology Act, 2000. As per the MoUs signed between CERT-In and counterpart agencies in Malaysia, Singapore and Japan, point of contacts are identified, face-to-face meetings and video/ tele-conferences are held periodically. Discussions are conducted on the operational activities and cyber security incident trends. Information

on latest cyber threats and best practices to enhance cyber security are exchanged. CERT-In is also participating in the projects conducted by respective counterpart agencies. The cooperation is enabling timely detection and resolution of cyber security incidents affecting respective constituency and responding to emerging cyber threats.

**Illegal surveillance by Israeli spyware Pegasus**

513. SHRI SANJAY RAUT:

SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE:

Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many Indian journalists and activists were targets of illegal surveillance by Israeli spyware Pegasus through WhatsApp for a two week period until May, 2019;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto on breach of privacy of citizens of India on the messaging platform WhatsApp; and

(c) the details of steps taken/proposed to be taken against WhatsApp and other spyware companies to safeguard the privacy of millions of Indian citizen?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DHOTRE SANJAY SHAMRAO): (a) and (b) Government had been informed by WhatsApp of a vulnerability affecting some WhatsApp mobile user's devices through a spyware namely Pegasus. According to WhatsApp, this spyware was developed by an Israel based company NSO Group and that it had developed and used Pegasus spyware to attempt to reach mobile phones of a possible number of 1400 users globally that includes 121 users from India.

Some statements have appeared based on reports in media, regarding breach of privacy of Indian citizens on WhatsApp. These attempts to malign the Government of India for the reported breach are completely misleading. The Government is committed to protect the fundamental rights of citizens, including the right to privacy. The Government operates strictly as per provisions of law and laid down protocols. There are adequate safeguards to ensure that no innocent citizen is harassed or his privacy breached.