

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1198
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.02.2022

**MISLEADING INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA
BY NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**

1198. SHRI K.R.N. RAJESHKUMAR:

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

- (a) whether several neighbouring countries, their media and social media are indulging in misleading and incorrect propaganda about the policies and actions of our Government and if so, the details thereof and the reaction of Government thereto;
- (b) the steps being taken by Government to provide reliable information on such policies and actions; and
- (c) the steps taken/being taken by Government to prevent people from falling prey to the campaigns by several neighbouring countries under which misleading and false information is provided?

ANSWER

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

(a): Yes, Sir. Cyberspace being virtual, borderless and anonymous, anyone can post, share, communicate any message from anywhere across the world at any time. As internet expands and delivers many benefits to citizens, the Government is also aware of growing phenomena of users harms caused by fake news and mis-information on some social media intermediaries/publishers' platforms including those supported by the state actors.

(b) and (c): The Government is committed to ensure that the Internet in India is Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable for all users. Government has taken several steps to address the challenges of mis-information and rumors spreading via various online media platforms including social media, news channel and other online portals. These, *inter alia*, include:

- (i) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), on 25.02.2021 has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 under the Information Technology Act (IT Act), 2000. These Rules require that the intermediaries follow certain due diligence as prescribed. Intermediaries are required to

publish privacy policy and terms of use of their platform. They are also required to inform their users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that is harmful, objectionable, and unlawful in any way. In addition, they are also required to remove any unlawful information, prohibited under any law, as and when brought to their

knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by appropriate government or its agency. The Rules also require that publishers of news and current affairs, shall observe the Code of Ethics which includes adherence to :

- (a) Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India under the Press Council Act, 1978;
- (b) Programme Code under section 5 of the Cable Television Networks Regulation) Act, 1995;
- (c) Content which is prohibited under any law for the time being in force shall not be published or transmitted.

(ii) Under Section 69A of the IT Act, based on the requests received through designated nodal officers, Government orders blocking of 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.

(iii) A Fact Check Unit has been setup under Press Information Bureau (PIB) of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in November, 2019. This Unit takes cognizance of fake news both suo-motu and by way of queries sent by citizens on its portal or through e-mail and whatsapp. The Unit responds to the relevant queries with correct information when the same pertains to Central Government or forwards them to States/UTs in other cases. The Unit also maintains a twitter account @PIBFactcheck and posts cases of fake news, being busted, on the same on regular basis. The Fact Check Unit of PIB covers news on various mediaplatforms, including electronic media.
