

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2016
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.3.2023

REGULATION OF MISINFORMATION AND FAKE NEWS

2016. SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH:
SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL:
DR. AMEE YAJNIK:
SHRI SYED NASIR HUSSAIN:

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

- (a) whether Government has taken note of the increase in recorded fake news cases, as reflected in data published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB);
- (b) whether Government intends to undertake any study on the spread of misinformation on social media during political protests and elections in India;
- (c) whether Government has taken any initiatives to prevent the spread of fake news on social media platforms;
- (d) if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the data on the number of complaints received and action taken by Government under its PIB fact check initiative since inception, year-wise?

ANSWER

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

(a): Data related to crimes, including cybercrimes, are maintained by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), based on data reported by State Police and other law enforcement agencies. As per information provided by NCRB, the number of cases registered under the category “Fake news on social media” is 188, 578 and 179 for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively.

(b): No proposal for such survey is under consideration of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

(c) and (d): To help achieve the aim of making Internet Open, Safe and Trusted and Accountable, the Central Government, in exercise of powers conferred by the Information Technology Act, 2000, has made the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. These rules cast specific obligation on intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence and provide that if they fail to observe such due diligence, they shall no longer be exempt from their liability under law for third-party information or data or communication link hosted by them. Such due diligence includes the following:

- (i) An intermediary shall make reasonable efforts to cause its user not to host, display, publish, transmit or share any information that knowingly and intentionally communicates any misinformation or information which is patently false and untrue or misleading in nature, or violates any law for the time being in force.
- (ii) On a voluntary basis upon violation of the above, and on actual knowledge upon receipt of a grievance or court order or notice from the appropriate government or its agency, not

hosting, storing or publishing unlawful information prohibited under law for the time being in force.

- (iii) To have in place a grievance redressal machinery, and resolve complaints of violation of the rules within 72 hours of being reported.

Further, a Fact Check Unit has been set up under Press Information Bureau under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in November, 2019 which takes cognizance of fake news relating to the Central Government both *suomoto* and by way of queries sent by citizens on its portal or through email and social media. The Unit responds to the relevant queries with correct and updated information.

(e): As per information furnished by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, since its inception, the PIB has countered over 37,000 complaints. It has busted 1,160 cases of fake news on @PIBFactCheck social media handles, year-wise details of which are as under:

Year	Number of fake news busted on @PIBFactCheck social media handles
2019	17
2020	394
2021	285
2022	338
2023	126*
Total	1,160

* Data is available till 7.2.2023.
