

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 561
TO BE ANSWERED ON 26.07.2024

CURBING FAKE NEWS

561. SHRI SUDHANSHU TRIVEDI:
SHRI NARHARI AMIN:
SHRI BABURAM NISHAD:
SHRI BRIJ LAL:
SHRI NARESH BANSAL:
SHRI ADITYA PRASAD:
SHRI MITHLESH KUMAR:
SMT. GEETA ALIAS CHANDRAPRABHA:
SHRI MADAN RATHORE:
DR. MEDHA VISHRAM KULKARNI:
SHRI NARAYANA KORAGAPPA:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

- (a) steps taken by the Government to counter menace of fake news in the country; and
- (b) whether steps have been taken by Government to counter fake news on Social media including mandating appointment of ombudsman by Social media Companies to check fake news;
- (c) if so, details thereof;
- (d) whether stringent laws are available under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)/Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)/Bharatiya Sakshya Act (BSA) to combat fake news and administer stringent punishment to fake news peddlers; and
- (e) whether complaints regarding fake news have been received on social media in Jharkhand, if so, whether Government has taken any initiative to redress such complaints; the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING, AND ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)

(a) to (e): The Government is committed to take all possible actions to control the spread of fake and misleading information which has potential to weaken our democracy and create fissures in the society. In this regard, the Government has statutory and institutional mechanisms in place to address fake news on various media platforms.

A Fact Check Unit (FCU) has been set up under Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in November, 2019 to counter fake news relating to the Central Government. After verifying the authenticity of news from authorised sources in Ministries/ Departments, FCU posts correct information on its social media platforms.

For Print Media, the newspapers have to adhere to “Norms of Journalistic Conduct” brought out by Press Council of India (PCI) which inter alia restrains publication of fake/ defamatory/ misleading news. The Council holds inquiry into alleged violations of Norms, as per section 14 of the Act, and may warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, editors, journalists, etc. as the case may be.

Content on TV Channels is required to adhere to the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, which inter alia provides that no content which contains anything obscene, defamatory, deliberate, false and suggestive innuendos and half-truths is broadcasted on private satellite TV channels. Cable Television Network (Amendment) Rules 2021, provides for a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism to look into the complaints relating to the violation of the Code by the TV channels. Appropriate action is taken where violation of Programme Code is found.

For Digital news publishers, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 provides for a Code of Ethics.

Different Sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 e.g. Section 175, Section 197, Section 353, etc. contains provision to address issues related to publication & circulation of any false information, and rumours through various media platforms viz. print, digital & electronic media.
