

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2966
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.12.2024

EFFORTS TO STOP FAKE NEWS IN PRINT, ELECTRONIC AND DIGITAL MEDIA

2966. DR. SASMIT PATRA:

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

- (a) the steps being taken by Government to stop fake news in print, electronic and digital media;
- (b) the number of people who have been booked by the police and action taken against them;
- (c) the number of such people who have restarted the fake news even after action has been taken against them; and
- (d) the reasons for Government's inability to curb fake news through fact-check and punitive action?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND
PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
(DR. L. MURUGAN)**

(a): The Government takes appropriate action to control the spread of fake and misleading information which has potential to adversely affect the society at large. In this regard, the Government has statutory and institutional mechanisms in place to address fake news on various media platforms viz. print media, electronic media & digital media.

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 PCI Act,1978 and may warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, editors, journalists, etc. as the case may be.

The content on private satellite 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 broadcast 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 the content of publishers of news and current affairs on digital media, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021(IT Rules, 2021) prescribes a Code of Ethics which, inter-alia, requires them to adhere to the Norms of Journalistic Conduct of PCI and the Programme Code laid down under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.

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

(b) to (d): ‘Police’ and ‘Public Order’ are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India and State Governments are responsible for prevention, detection and investigation of crimes and also for prosecution of the criminals through their law enforcement agencies for crimes including those relating to circulation of fake news. Different sections of Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, 2023 viz. Section 175, Section 197, Section 253 etc contain provisions relating to publication and circulation of any false information and rumours through various media platforms.
