

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 535
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 29.11.2024

ADDICTION OF CHILDREN TO ONLINE GAMES

535#. DR. PARMAR JASHVANTSINH SALAMSINH:

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

- (a) whether Government is receiving complaints regarding addiction of children to online games in the country;
- (b) whether Government has made any plan to protect children from addiction of online games and to control online games in the country; and
- (c) if so, whether setting of time limit may be considered for online games, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI JITIN PRASADA)

(a) to (c): The Government is cognizant of the risks posed by online gaming and potential harms like addiction. The policies of the Central Government are aimed at ensuring a safe, trusted and accountable Internet for its users.

To address various socio-economic concerns in online games like addiction, MeitY after extensive consultations with relevant stakeholders, has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (“IT Rules, 2021”) in exercise of the powers given under the IT Act. The IT Rules, 2021 cast specific due diligence obligations on intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, with respect to the information that is not to be hosted, displayed, uploaded, published, transmitted, stored or shared on the platforms. Intermediaries are required not to host, store or publish any information violative of any law for the time being in force. Intermediaries are required to ensure their accountability that includes their expeditious action towards removal of the unlawful information categorised under the IT Rules, 2021 or on the basis of grievances received against any information that, among other things, is harmful to child or that is relating or encouraging money laundering or gambling.

Further, the Ministry of Education has issued an advisory for parents & teachers on 27th September, 2021 on overcoming online gaming downsides. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education on 10th December, 2021 has issued an advisory to Parents, Teachers on Children's safe online gaming. The advisory has indicated that playing online games leads to a serious gaming addiction which has been considered as a gaming disorder. It has further warned that playing online games with no restriction and self-limits leads many players to become addicted and are eventually diagnosed with gaming disorder. Advisory to parents and teachers has been recommended for wider circulation and educating them for necessary action ensuring effective use in overcoming all online gaming downsides with the associated mental and physical stress to children.

In addition, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (“MIB”) on 4th December, 2020 has also issued an advisory to all private satellite television channels on ‘Advertisements on Online Games, Fantasy Sports, etc.’, advising all broadcasters that the guidelines issued by

the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) be complied with and that the advertisements broadcast on television adhere to the same. Brief of the guidelines are as follows-

1. No gaming advertisement may depict any person under the age of 18 years.
2. Every such gaming advertisement must carry the disclaimer in line with ASCI code in Print/static as well as Audio/video forms indicating that this game involves an element of financial risk and may be addictive.
3. The advertisements should not present their games as an alternative employment option.
4. They also should not depict that the person doing the gaming activity in any way is more successful as compared to others.

The MIB has also issued an advisory dated 21st March, 2024 to media including social media platforms, to refrain from publishing, broadcasting advertisements of online betting platforms and/or any such product/service depicting these platforms in a surrogate manner. The online advertisement intermediaries have also been advised not to target such advertisements towards the Indian audience.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (“MHA”) has established the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (“I4C”) to provide a framework and eco-system for Law Enforcement Agencies (“LEAs”) to deal with cyber-crimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. MHA has also launched the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (<https://cybercrime.gov.in>) to enable the public to report all types of cyber-crimes. Cyber-crime incidents reported on this portal are routed to the respective State/UT law enforcement agency for further handling as per the provisions of law. The portal has distinct mechanisms for registering complaints against women/child related crimes and financial frauds. A toll-free Helpline number ‘1930’ has been operationalised to get assistance in lodging online cyber complaints.
