

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2245

ANSWERED ON:18.12.2013

MISUSE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Jeyadurai Shri S. R.;Meghe Shri Datta Raghobaji;Panda Shri Baijayant;Shekhar Shri Neeraj;Singh Shri Bhola;Singh Shri Yashvir;Viswanathan Shri P.;Yadav Shri Ranjan Prasad

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

- (a) whether some Information Technology (IT) companies found to be misusing social networking site / social media to malign the image of prominent personalities by artificial boosting someone's popularity;
- (b) if so, the details of cases noticed during the last three years and the current year, year wise, State-wise;
- (c) the action taken by the Government against such IT companies;
- (d) whether objectionable and obscene contents like anti India sentiments and pornographic materials are also posted on the social networking sites; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government against such networking site and companies / individuals for posting such materials?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI MILIND DEORA)

(a) and (b): Reports have appeared in the media that investigative website Cobrapost conducted a sting operation called Operation Blue Virus, through which it was revealed that Information Technology Companies, providing management services on social media, have used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to malign the image of prominent personalities by artificially boosting someone's popularity.

However, no such specific complaint/incident has been reported to the Government in the last three years and current year against any Information Technology company for such activity.

(c): Does not arise.

(d) and (e): Social Networking sites have emerged as an online medium / platform to enable users to share ideas, activities & events and express views/opinions on specific topics / events. Several groups and individuals have hosted content on these social networking sites for a variety of purposes, which may be liked by one section of society and used gainfully. Several Groups have posted on these sites objectionable content for purposes such as stoking anti-national sentiments and pornographic materials. Such sites can be accessed by all sections of users. Most of such networking sites are hosted outside the country.

Government has taken the following actions in this regard:

i) Government has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011 under Section 79 of the Information Technology Act. These rules require that the Intermediaries, including national and international social networking sites, shall observe due diligence while discharging their duties and shall inform the users of Computer resources not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that is harmful, objectionable, affect minors and unlawful in any way. The said rules also require the intermediaries to appoint Grievance Officers to address the grievances received from users and affected individuals / organizations as and when received by them.

ii) Government issued the an advisory on 17th August 2012 to all the intermediaries, including national and international social networking sites, advising them to take necessary action to disable inflammatory and hateful content hosted on their web sites on priority basis.

iii) The Government is in regular dialog with the intermediaries including social networking sites for effective and efficient disablement of such content.