

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:36

ANSWERED ON:25.02.2015

INTERNET SECURITY

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

- (a) whether the Government has recently blocked some websites citing national security concerns and if so, the details thereof including the details of blocked sites;
- (b) whether the Government has any mechanism to verify the ownership details of such websites and if so, the details thereof and if not, whether the Government has sought the help of other countries in this regard;
- (c) whether there is any proposal to impose restrictions on the contents of websites / censor specific websites and if so, the details; and
- (d) the steps taken to curb indecent, obscene, anti-India and violent uploads?

Answer

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO 36 FOR 25-02-2015 REGARDING INTERNET SECURITY

(a): Based on the request sent by Anti-Terrorism Squad, Mumbai accompanied by the order from Court of Mumbai, an order was issued for blocking of web sites from public access within the country on 18.11.2014. Anti-Terrorism Squad, Mumbai stated that the websites / pages were being used for jihadi propoganda and for mentoring Indian youths to join ISIS / jihadi activities. These web sites work on the concept of pasting content. These web sites were not social media sites but such sites were being misused to post anti-national information. Many of these websites do not require any authentication for posting information, videos or for downloading the contents, thus helping to hide the identities. Also the privacy protection policy of domain Registrar who registered such web sites created additional constraints to identify the owner of web sites. Further, it was mentioned that these web-sites were being used frequently for pasting, communicating such content by the changing the page name even blocking the earlier postings. The objectionable information were appearing and disappearing regularly and dynamically. There was no visible Universal Resource Locator (URL) on the basis of which individual web pages could be identified. One of the web sites was providing cryptography facility using which the information content on the web site could be encrypted thereby aiding concealment of information and communication between anti-national groups.

The Government fully respects the fundamental right of free speech and expression. After assurance from the website owners to comply with laws of land and their policy in this regard, and in consultation with Anti-Terrorism Squad, all 32 websites were unblocked, following the same legal process adopted during the blocking of the said sites. The website owners also acknowledged unblocking of their sites and accessibility of sites by users in India.

(b): The mechanism of "whois" directory is most often and commonly used for obtaining information relating to domain registration of web site and the details of owner of web sites for identification and contacting the owners of web sites. All the web sites in reference were found to be registered outside the country and the addresses for contact as given in the "whois" directory were found to be incomplete. Further, details of registration of number of web sites were behind privacy protection thereby details of registration and owner details were not disclosed in the "whois" directory. The names of the contact persons and the grievance officers were not mentioned in number of web sites. Twitter handles / accounts were found out for some of the web sites for contacting them. The web sites responded to twitter messages and assured to work with the Government within the ambit of their policy and Indian Laws. Thereafter, in one of such web sites anti-national information were again posted which was promptly removed on its own by the said web site.

(c) and (d): The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011 under Section 79 of the Information Technology Act requires that the Intermediaries 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. Beyond such Rules, there is no proposal to impose restrictions on the context of web sites /censor specific web site.

As per section 69A of the IT Act 2000 and the rules published there in, Government takes action, whenever sites/ URL pages with objectionable contents infringing any Law of the Country are brought to its notice by the law enforcement agencies or when Court issues direction to block any URL of websites. Further, Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) gets requests for blocking of objectionable content from individuals and organisations, which forwards those requests to the Social Networking Sites for appropriate action.

An Advisory was issued on August 17, 2012 under Section 69A and Sub-Section 3(B) under Section 79 of Information Technology Act 2000 and Rules therein to all intermediaries asking them to take necessary action to disable inflammatory and hateful content hosted on their website on priority basis. Government is in regular dialog with intermediaries including social networking sites for effective disablement of such objectionable content.