GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6515
ANSWERED ON:06.05.2015
SECURITY THREAT FROM MOBILE APPS
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether mobile applications like Whats App, Viber etc. pose a security threat to our nation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Indian security agencies cannot intercept such data immediately because the servers for such applications are located outside India;

(d) if so, the steps taken/being taken by the Government to address the issue;

(e) whether the Government also proposes to establish servers of popular social networking sites, e.g. hike, facebook, twitter etc. within the country; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) & (b) Madam, Security/Law Enforcement Agencies face difficulty while dealing with encrypted communications provided by various service providers. In fact, world over several services providers are providing services like WhatsApp, Viber, We Chat, Skype, Yahoo, Gmail & other services for sharing audio, video, image, email, data and accessing other web services anytime and anywhere in a secure manner. The security of these services is achieved through encryption technology. These services are mostly availed by the citizens across world through Internet. At times these services or may also used by anti-national and criminal elements, which pose a security threat.

(c) & (d) The Government has mandated all the Telecom service Providers including Internet Service Providers to provide the Lawful Interception and Monitoring facilities to the security agencies for all the services including WhatsApp, Viber, etc. As such security agencies are able to intercept these encrypted communication services through the lawful interception facilities provided by the Telecom services providers, but they are not able to decrypt some of encrypted intercepted communication to readable format as there are multifarious aspects involved in Security/Law Enforcement Agencies getting such encrypted communication in readable format such as technical, international relationship, legal and regulatory policy, commercial and security requirements etc.

(e) & (f) The Government has not decided to get servers of poplar social networking sites, e.g. hike, facebook, twitter etc. established within the county. However, the Government regularly interacts with all stakeholders including social media providers to resolve the issues arising from time to time, related to handling of unlawful content on Internet.