

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION. NO. 3106
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 19.03.2025

BLOCKING WEBSITES OF MAGAZINES, SOCIAL MEDIA AND JOURNALS

3106. SHRI RAJA A:

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

- (a) the number of websites of magazines, social media, journals that were blocked under the Information Technology Act during each of the last five years, State-wise;
- (b) whether due process of law was followed before issuing the blocking order and the penalty/fines imposed;
- (c) whether the Government intends to introduce greater transparency in the process of blocking digital content including publicly disclosing orders and reasons for such actions since many courts have passed orders against such arbitrary actions in view of the freedom of Press in democracy; and (d) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): The policies of the Government are aimed at ensuring a safe, trusted and accountable Internet for its users while ensuring the Internet remains free from any form of unlawful content or information. To help achieve this aim, the Central Government, in exercise of its powers under Information Technology Act, 2000, has notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules"). These rules cast specific obligations on intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence while discharging its duties. Failure to comply with the obligations results in the loss of exemption from liability for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available by them, and are liable for the same as per law. Such obligations include the making of reasonable efforts by the intermediary to cause its users not to host, display, upload, publish, transmit or store any information that knowingly or intentionally violates any law. Further, intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, are also required to remove any unlawful information as and when brought to their knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by an appropriate government or its authorized agency. Such unlawful information includes information prohibited under any law for the time being in force in relation to the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India; security of the State; friendly relations with foreign States; public order; decency or morality; in relation to contempt of court; defamation; incitement to an offence relating to the above, or any information which is prohibited under any law for the time being in force.

The objectionable content is examined by an Inter-Departmental Committee as constituted under rule 14 of the aforesaid rules having representatives from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence including domain experts from Press Council of India (PCI), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Further, the rules provide for an opportunity to the publisher or the intermediary concerned to appear and submit their reply and clarifications before the Inter-Departmental Committee.

The notices for takedown of any such information on the intermediary platform are sent directly by the respective appropriate governments or their authorised agencies where the appropriate government can be both the State and Central Government as per the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution.
