

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3450
TO BE ANSWERED ON 01.04.2022

ACTION AGAINST APP TARGETING MUSLIM WOMEN

3450. SHRI DEREK O' BRIEN:

Will the Minister of Electronics and Information Technology be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Ministry has taken cognizance of the app that targeted muslim women by auctioning them, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the action that has been taken against these apps, the details thereof; and
- (c) whether Government is taking long term steps to prevent these incidents from repeating again, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR)

(a) and (b):The Government is committed to ensure that the Internet in India is Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable for all users. As internet expands and delivers many benefits for citizens, the Government is also aware of growing phenomena of users harms caused by misuse of some social media /intermediaries platforms by some users which also includes crimes against women and children caused as a consequence.

Two such Apps with derogatory and malafide intentions against women, which came to the notice of Government, were hosted on an open-source platform namely "GitHub". Both the Apps allegedly picked up the profiles of the women from social media platforms, and Twitter was used to promote the alleged content.

'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. The Law Enforcement Agencies take legal action as per provisions of applicable law. In the instant case, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) coordinated with service providers and provided technical information to law enforcement agency to facilitate investigation.

(c): To strengthen the mechanism to deal with cyber crimes including crimes against women in a coordinated manner, the Central Government has taken several measures in consultation with various stakeholders which, *inter-alia*, include the following:

- (i) The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 has provisions to deal with prevalent cyber crimes including the ones related to women. Sections 66E, 67, and 67A of the Act provide for the punishment and fine for violation of bodily privacy and publishing or transmitting of obscene/sexually-explicit material in electronic form. Further, sections 354C and 354D of Indian Penal Code provide punishment for cyber bullying and cyber stalking.
- (ii) The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 empower the users of Intermediaries and makes the social media platforms accountable for users' safety. The Rules *inter alia* provide for

- Expeditious removal of any content which is prima facie in the nature of any material which exposes the private area of such individual, shows such individual in full or partial nudity or shows or depicts such individual in any sexual act or conduct, or is in the nature of impersonation in an electronic form, including artificially morphed images of such individual.
 - A robust grievance redressal mechanism.
- (iii) Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) operates a National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) to enable citizens to report complaints pertaining to all types of cyber crimes with special focus on cyber crimes against women.
- (iv) MeitY through a program, namely, Information Security Education & Awareness (ISEA), has been creating awareness among users including women and children highlighting the importance of digital safety while using Internet. A dedicated website for information security awareness (<https://www.infosecawareness.in>) provides relevant awareness material.
