

# LYNCHING: SOCIAL MEDIA SITES TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE

Relevant for: Security Related Issues | Topic: Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in internal security challenges

A panel headed by Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba, which deliberated on measures to check incidents of lynching, submitted its report to a Group of Ministers headed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

In May and June, more than 20 people were lynched based on fake posts or rumours floating on various social media platforms.

The panel discussed such incidents and is learnt to have come to the conclusion that social media platforms needed to act in a “time-bound” manner.

## FIR against officials

A senior government official said social media platforms — Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter — would be made accountable for not blocking malicious posts and videos when brought to their notice and an “FIR could be lodged against their country heads” for not complying with government orders and they could be prosecuted under law.

The committee of secretaries held consultations with a cross-section of society and other stakeholders before submitting its report to the Group of Ministers. The GoM will now submit its recommendations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a final decision, a Home Ministry official said.

The panel report will first be discussed by the GoM, whose members are External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot.

## Objectionable content

“We have stepped up engagement with social media platforms. There is a provision in law which enables the government to issue orders to remove objectionable content, block websites, etc. Law enforcement agencies should be able to step up the act and monitor more proactively,” the official added.

He said social media platforms were given a report showing their compliance with the various government orders.

“Compliance should be timely, they have agreed to better it. Some countries employ non-governmental organisations and volunteers who proactively surf the Internet. We have created a portal where people can report such videos and content and that can be forwarded by the National Crime Records Bureau [the nodal body] to the States concerned for appropriate action,” the official said. Last month, the Home Ministry issued advisories to the State governments and authorities of the Union Territories after the Supreme Court issued directives to check incidents of lynching in the country.

## Special task force

The Centre asked them to appoint an officer in each district at the level of Superintendent of Police, set up a special task force to gather intelligence, and closely monitor social media contents to prevent mob attacks on people on the suspicion of being child-lifters or cattle smugglers.

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