

# IT RULES OBLIGATE SOCIAL MEDIA FIRMS ON CONTENT

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: IT, Internet and Communications

The latest amendment to the IT rules lays a definite due diligence obligation on social media firms so that no unlawful content or misinformation is posted on their platforms, said Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar. Excerpts:

## **One criticism is that the grievance panel will give the government greater powers in content moderation...**

There are two issues that we are looking at — safety and trust, and accountability. Earlier, under due diligence, intermediaries had to only broadcast to users about not uploading certain categories of harmful/unlawful content. There was no enforcement. We have changed that to say not only shall intermediaries inform and publish, but also cause that these things don't happen and in that we have included misinformation (in the content categories). So there is now a definite obligation on the part of the intermediary on content moderation.

Currently, users just get a 'thank you for sending your grievance, we will revert to you' message from these platforms. The purpose of the GAC is to address unresolved grievances.

It is not an area the government wants to get into. We are doing it very, very reluctantly because we have an obligation and duty to the digital Nagriks that someone listens to their grievances; if platforms do not, then at least the government should.

## **Do intermediaries need to verify if the content is factual?**

Intermediaries will need to verify it and 72 hours is enough time to verify. If there isn't ample information available they should take it down. We have done a detailed study and found that the velocity and acceleration of flow of misinformation is 8-10 times faster than any regular information and it reaches a wider audience.

## **You will also be meeting intermediaries. What is the agenda?**

I don't want things to be adversarial. This is not about just regulating intermediaries. It's about a shared view on how do we approach a safe and trusted Internet.

## **As to the new rules aiding partnership with the industry, is it being reciprocated by them?**

I'm working on that. We did extensive public consultation with the industry.

We decided on a 72-hour time frame for content removal instead of 24 hours... They said in March we don't want GAC, we want a Self Regulatory Organisation (SRO)... I told them if you come with an SRO, I will include the SRO in the... rules. We waited at least two months. But the industry did not come up with the SRO.

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