

‘The IT Rules make social media verification mandatory’- MoS for electronics

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To achieve an open, safe, trusted and accountable Internet, the Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology said new IT rules will help to accomplish the goal. Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on Friday about the positive impacts of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules").

With the expansion of the Internet and more and more Indians coming online, users are increasingly exposed to potential harm arising from improper use of cyberspace. Therefore, the new IT Rules have made the verification of social media accounts mandatory.

Chandrasekhar said, "With regard to due verification of social media accounts and the terms of use for any paid services offered by them, it is informed that the due diligence requirements for a social media intermediary under the IT Rules include, in the interest of transparency, prominently publishing on its website and/or mobile app and informing users of its user agreement in English or any language specified in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution, in the language of the user's choice. Further, in respect of a social media intermediary which has more than 50 lakh registered users in India, such requirements also include enabling its users to voluntarily verify their accounts and provide such accounts with visible marks of verification".

And, with regard to steps to address the potential damage due to fake accounts, the minister informed the Rajya Sabha members that section 66D of the IT Act penalises cheating by impersonating by means of any communication device or computer resource and the same is punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and a fine of up to one lakh rupees.

He advised the social media intermediaries to make reasonable efforts to cause the users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, store, update or share, among others, information that deceives or misleads the addressee about the origin of the message or knowingly and intentionally communicates any misinformation or information which is patently false and untrue or misleading in nature, or impersonates another person.