

Social media must abide by the law of the land: Prasad

Govt has no plans to regulate content, says IT Minister

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Replying to a calling attention motion in the Rajya Sabha here on Thursday on the misuse of social media platforms to “spread rumours and fake news

leading to rising incidents of violence and lynching in the country,” the Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad said the Centre has no plans to regulate the content appearing on social network platform. But he reminded such

“Social network platforms have to follow Article 19(2) of the Constitution and ensure that their platforms are not used to commit and provoke terrorism, extremism, violence and crime.”

**RAVI SHANKAR
PRASAD**
IT Minister



platforms that they will have to abide by the law of the land. The Centre came into attack from the Opposition over the incidents of mob lynching based on the rumours spread using various social media platforms.

Prasad said the Centre is committed to freedom of speech and expression and privacy of its citizens as enshrined in the Constitution. “The government does not regulate content appearing in social media platform. These social network platforms, though, are required to follow due diligence as provided in Section 79 of the Information Technology Act 2000 and the Rules notified therein. They have also to follow Article 19 (2) of the Constitution and ensure that their platforms are not used to commit and provoke terrorism, extremism, vi-

olence and crime,” he said in the Rajya Sabha. He added all acts of “mischief” by the platforms will be taken into cognisance by the Centre.

Opposition flays Centre

The Opposition said if the Centre fails to take action against its own ministers and MPs who “garland” the culprits of mob lynching, the menace of fake news can never be resolved. Opposition leader Ghulam Nabi Azad urged the Centre to drop the Ministers who visited the culprits in a jail in Bihar and garlanded a few of the accused in Jharkhand who were on bail. Azad said rumours are created by forces who want to disrupt the communal harmony in the country.

RJD’s Manoj Jha said violence will be a “day-to-day” affair if Parliament fails to curb

fake news. He said “words of violence” are spreading from social media to electronic media too. Citing his own personal example, CPI MP D Raja said “social media warriors” of certain political party intimidate their political opponents.

Trinamool Congress leader Derek O’Brien asked the Centre why its ministers are objecting the Facebook’s decision to pull out the page of an online portal for spreading fake news.

Prasad replied that there was no evidence to suggest that the portal was propagating a particular ideology. SP’s Jawed Ali Khan said the riots in Western Uttar Pradesh were created using social media. Nominated member Swapna Dasgupta said social media gave voice to news neglected by the mainstream media.

Lawyer and MP KTS Tulsi alleged that the police is hand in glove with the perpetrators of violence and that is a reason why no arrests are being made in many cases despite evidences such as video records were available.

Prasad said a campaign to educate school children about the misuse of social media for propagation of false news will be taken up by the Centre. “The Common Service Centres will also be engaged in the task of promoting this message among people, especially in rural areas,” Prasad said and added: “The State governments will also be requested to join in this effort to make the citizens more aware to prevent the use and abuse of social media. In this regard, I will be writing to all Chief Ministers.”