The government has sought public comments on the proposed amendments to the Information Technology (IT) Act that seek to make it mandatory for platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter to trace “originator” of “unlawful” information, while also removing such content within 24 hours after being notified.

It pointed out that a number of lynching incidents were reported in 2018 mostly owing to fake news being circulated through WhatsApp and other social media sites.

As per the draft ‘The Information Technology [Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules] 2018’ released on Monday, the intermediary after being notified by the appropriate authority should remove or disable access to unlawful content within 24 hours in the “interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence, on its computer resource without vitiating the evidence in any manner…”

The intermediary is also expected to preserve such information and associated records for at least 180 days for investigation purposes as against 90 days now.

Following fears of “surveillance and censorship” with the proposed norms, the government clarified that it does not regulate content appearing on social network platforms.

CONTINUED ON → PAGE 10