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Comply by July 4 or lose status as intermediary: Govt to Twitter

In a missive sent on Monday, the Ministry warned that if content flagged by it is not taken down by the microblogging platform, the company will risk losing its immunity as an intermediary.

By: **ENS Economic Bureau** | New Delhi |

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The MeitY notice, addressed to Twitter's chief compliance officer, said that while a designated officer of the ministry has issued various directions for blocking certain pieces of content (Reuters File)

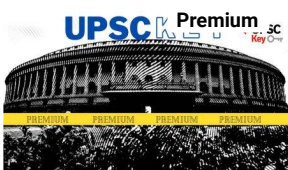
The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) has given Twitter “one last opportunity” to comply with its blocking orders. In a missive sent on Monday, the ministry warned that if content flagged by it is not taken down by the microblogging platform, the company will risk losing its immunity as an intermediary.

The MeitY notice, addressed to Twitter’s chief compliance officer, said that while a designated officer of the ministry has issued various directions for blocking certain pieces of content and accounts under Section 69(A) of the Information Technology Act, the company has “failed to comply with the directions on multiple occasions”. Section 69(A) of the IT Act empowers the government to issue blocking orders to social media companies.

The MeitY has given Twitter until July 4 to comply with all its blocking orders, failing which it might lose its intermediary status, which will make the website legally liable for content posted by users on its platform. Queries sent to Twitter remained unanswered until publication.

A senior government official, on the condition of anonymity, said, “The notices sent to Twitter pertain to several cases, both where the government had asked it to take down certain content and where the company had wrongfully taken down some content.”

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According to data shared by Twitter with the Lumen database, the company has blocked a number of tweets in India, including a tweet by US-based NGO Freedom House on India’s declining press freedom. Twitter voluntarily submits information about content and accounts it has blocked following government orders with the

Lumen database, which is managed under an independent research project of the Berkman Klein Centre for Internet & Society at Harvard University.

The MeitY's action comes as it has proposed fresh amendments to rules governing intermediaries like Twitter and Facebook — key among which is a proposal to set up government-appointed grievance committees with the power to review and revoke content moderation decisions taken by these companies.

Twitter had run into trouble with the government last year as well after a new set of intermediary rules came into effect in May 2021. The issue then was over Twitter appointing an external person as its India-based grievance officer. The rules require that the grievance officer be an employee of the company.

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