

GOA POLICE ISSUES ADVISORY FOR ADMINS OF WHATSAAP DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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The Goa Police has noticed that during the present coronavirus crisis the Social Media platforms such as WhatsApp etc. are used to spread a lot of fake news, misinformation and hate speech messages. In view of this, the Admins of the group and every users of Social Media platform are advised to use the platform responsibly.

The Police has advised 1. Not to post fake news, hate speech or misinformation in groups. 2. Immediately delete any post, if you find it objectionable or the admin notifies you 3. Do not further forward or circulate any such news you get from other members of the group. 4. Check the source and veracity of any news/image/video/meme you receive, before posting it on the group. 5. If you find any piece of misinformation, fake news or hate speech, report it on www.cybercrime.gov.in or to your nearest police station, and also inform your group admin immediately. 6. Never share any content that is violent, pornographic and discriminative against any religion/community or Group.

The admin of the group should 1. Ensure that every group member is reliable and responsible enough to share only verified news. 2. Inform all the group members about the rules of posting in the group. 3. Warn all the members and prevent them from sharing objectionable content 4. Actively and regularly monitor content that is being shared on the group. 5. It is advisable that if the group is uncontrollable, then the group settings can be changed to only where admins have the right to post. 6. Inform the police if any members resort to mischief and share objectionable content.

The consequences for failure to adhere to above advise: The admins as well as the users posting such objectionable content will be punished under section 66C of the IT act which deals with punishment for identity theft and says that whoever, fraudulently or dishonestly makes use of the electronic signature, password or any other unique identification feature of any person, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to rupees one lakh. Sec 66D of the IT

Act deals with punishment for cheating by personation by using computer resource, with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to one lakh rupees. • Sec 188 of the IPC prescribes punishment for disobeying any order duly promulgated by a public servant. • Section 153A of IPC punishes offenses related to promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony. Punishment can extend from imprisonment from three to five years as well as fine. • Section 153B of IPC safeguards the interests of “class of persons” and “national integration” by providing punishment against imputations and assertions prejudicial to national integration. • Section 295A of IPC deals with actions that are intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs. • Section 505 of IPC deals with spreading of false and mischievous news intended to upset the public tranquility. Section 54 of Disaster Management Act deals with someone who is providing/forwarding misleading information related to the severity/magnitude of the epidemic which may lead to panic, and that person will be punished with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine. • Section 144 & Section 144 (3) of Criminal Procedure Code 1973, where orders by the district magistrate, against such WhatsApp group can be passed. These orders can direct the group settings to be changed so that only WhatsApp group admins / owners can send messages. [Even after this setting, if there are any messages sent on the group which are fake, insulting any religion, spreading hatred, bigotry messages which may create communal tensions, the admins /group owners would be held solely liable]

All the citizens are urged not to post, share, forward, disseminate, any message, content, pictures or photos, videos anything that could promote enmity on grounds of religion, nationality, race, language and other grounds of discrimination or disrupt public order, decency and morality. If such act is committed, the law enforcement agency will take stern action against such perpetrators. The law

enforcement agencies have powers under law to take legal action against anyone who spreads rumours and causes a state of panic and unrest between religious communities in this state of crisis. Any violations will be dealt with firmly as per law including apprehension of

the offenders and appropriate action under the preventive sections of law. Use social media responsibly. Verify content before

believing or forwarding. Discard fake news and malicious messages. Let us fight unitedly against Covid-19. Stay Home Stay Safe.

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