

Here's How PM Modi Could Be Helping Spread Fake News In Social Media: US Security Studies Expert

Jajati Karan

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Delivering his key note address while gracing the ongoing conference on 'dealing fake news in social media' organised by Asia Journalism Forum and supported by Temasek Foundation Connects here on Friday (August 18), US Security Studies expert Prof Shyam Tekwani highlighted on how fake news is being helped by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to spread in social media.

Addressing the symposium, Prof Tekwani averred, "Many of the fake stories go viral because they advance the Hindu nationalist agenda of the popular Prime Minister Narendra Modi and promote Islamophobia at the expenses of the country's large Muslim minority."

"Modi prides himself on his social media presence with more Twitter followers than any world leader except President Trump. And his official account follows some Twitter users who spread fake news, while his government has been caught peddling half-baked information," Prof Tekwani claimed.

He further stated, "Fake news fuels nationalism and Islamophobia. A news channel in June reported on "rate cards" allegedly circulating in the southern state of Kerala that offered cash rewards of up to \$ 10,000 for converting Hindus to Islam..... and asserted that the rewards system was the work of Islamic State, which had set up 'a base in India'."

Remarking that "Fake news is nothing new, technology has aggravated it," Prof Tekwani added, "Much of the mainstream media lacks the skills, resources and public trust to debunk fake news. Moreover, increasingly even mainline media outlets-including TV news channels with significant viewership- are willing to peddle half-baked rumours as fact."

Notably, Mr Tekwani is the incumbent Associate Professor at Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies based at Honolulu. Prof Tekwani's area of expertise is New Media Technologies, Terrorism, Global Media, Conflict Reporting, Media and Foreign Policy.

Need to be mentioned, the theme for the Asia Journalism Forum is "Reporting Facts and the Future of Journalism."

The forum comprised an opening keynote by Associate Professor Cherian George and a full-day conference on Friday (August 18) that focused on the problems of fake news and its impact on journalism.

While an estimated number of 100 participants, comprising policymakers, media practitioners, industry leaders and academics from Singapore and Asia turned up, speakers included journalists, academics and social media experts from the region.