

Guidelines and Norms of conduct for use of Social Media by the officers, personnel and staffs of Police Department, Government of Meghalaya, India.

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance for police officers and personnel working for the Government of Meghalaya, India, in the context of using social media both for official and private use.

This guidance addresses standards of behaviour rather than detailed policies and procedures. It is not possible to provide detailed guidance for every conceivable situation; therefore emphasis is placed on guiding principles of behaviour that are applicable under the Code of Conduct for police officers and personnel.

Official and private use

Whether using social media for official or private purposes, officers, force personnel & ministerial staff are reminded that comments will often be permanently available and able to be reproduced in other media. For the purposes of this guidance, the definition of official and private use is as follows:

Official use: Using social media tools when acting as an official representative of the Police Department, Government of Meghalaya, India.

Private use: Using social media tools in a private capacity

Social media - defined

Social media is the term used for internet based tools for sharing and discussing information among people. It refers to user-generated information, opinion and other content shared and discussed over open digital networks.

Social media may include (although is not limited to):

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace)
- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. Flickr, Youtube)
- Blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter)
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g. Google/Yahoo/Facebook groups)
- Wikis (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Vod and podcasting
- Email and instant messaging (e.g. Whatsapp, Telegram, Hike)

Social media also includes all other emerging electronic/digital communication applications.

Social media and the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct applies when participating in social media in the same way as when participating in any other media, public forum or engagement with the community. The Code of Conduct applies to all police officers and personnel when participating in social media for official and private use. The sections of the Code of Conduct that are of particular relevance to this guidance have been identified:

- Remaining apolitical

- Making public comment
- Public trust
- Work resources
- Open to scrutiny
- Fair and objective treatment
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Equity and diversity.

Remaining apolitical

- Police officers and personnel should avoid making statements or engaging in activities of a party political nature.

Making public comments

- Use of social media for making public comment in relation to duties must follow the appropriate internal communications process and authorisation.
- When using social media for official purposes it should not be used to express personal opinions.
- When using social media for private purposes, staff must ensure that they make it clear that any comments relating to Meghalaya government activities are not official, and that they are speaking only on behalf of themselves.
- Staff must ensure that any personal comments don't compromise their capacity to perform their public role in an unbiased manner.

Public trust

- Whether using social media for official use, or in a private capacity, police officers and personnel must not do anything that may adversely affect their standing as a public official or which could bring themselves and other government department into disrepute. The nature of social media increases the risk of reputational damage through private activities such as:
 - posting images, information or links to images or information;
 - disclosing one's own and others' personal information;
 - Engaging in a heated debate or argument.

Work resources

- Police officers and personnel must comply with the department conduct rules regarding private use of work resources, including their use in engaging in social media. Those conduct rules will have regard to not only the efficient and effective use of public resources, but also the risks associated with their use for private purposes (e.g. 'electronic footprints' which could identify the user as working for the police department).

Open to scrutiny

- Police officers and personnel must maintain **accurate and reliable records** of their official use of social media as required by the department and Government of Meghalaya, India.

Fair and objective treatment

- All communications of especially official nature should be objective and courteous while dealing with the government, community and colleagues.

Privacy and confidentiality

- Police officers and personnel must ensure the privacy and confidentiality of information acquired at work and the same needs to be protected at all times and treated in accordance with relevant laws and policies. The potential scope and ramifications of a breach of privacy or confidentiality when using social media are severe. Therefore all such **classified communications in social media should be made available only within the police department.**

Equity and diversity

- Obligations on police officers and personnel to support an environment free of discrimination, harassment and bullying also apply to their use of social media.

Top 5 things to remember when using social and digital media, either at work or in a personal capacity

- **Common sense:** social media helps us work openly and connect with the citizens we serve – just remember to apply common sense!
- Adhere to the Police department **conduct rules** – **apply the same standards online as are required offline**, whether acting in an official or personal capacity
- **Doubts? If in doubt, don't post it**
- **Accuracy:** check the accuracy and sensitivity of what you are posting before pressing submit
- Permanent: **Digital footprints are inefaceable**; remember once something is posted online it's very difficult to remove it, so better not to share any information, pictures with general public.

All police officers and personnel should **refrain** from:

- Uploading pictures, videos, etc in uniform with service weapons and government vehicles.
- Uploading pictures of police establishments such as SP office, Police reserve, Battalion campus, PS, OP, etc.
- Uploading pictures and videos taken from encounter sites.
- Sharing information with family, friends, media and other public domain relating to the incidents involving police/CI operations/militants.
- Becoming member of anti-national/anti-government groups and websites
- Signing up for websites/blogs/micro-blogs containing inappropriate/irrelevant content which may bring embarrassment to oneself and the department.

Information should be shared only on professional fronts and only within the police department.