

WHATSAPP REJECTS INDIA'S DEMAND TO TRACK ORIGIN OF MESSAGE

Relevant for: Security Related Issues | Topic: Basics of Cyber Security and related matters

WhatsApp CEO Chris Daniels meets Electronics & Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad in New Delhi on Tuesday. | Photo Credit: [Special Arrangement](#)

WhatsApp has rejected India's demand for a solution to track the origin of messages on its platform, saying building traceability would undermine end-to-end encryption and affect privacy protection for users.

Emphasising that people use its platform for all kinds of "sensitive conversations", the Facebook-owned company said the focus is on educating people about misinformation.

The government has been pushing WhatsApp to find a technology solution to trace the origin of messages, a move it believes can help curb horrific crimes like mob-lynching emanating from fake news.

"Building traceability would undermine end-to-end encryption and the private nature of WhatsApp, creating the potential for serious misuse. WhatsApp will not weaken the privacy protections we provide", a WhatsApp spokesperson told PTI.

Over the past few months, WhatsApp has drawn flak over its use in spreading fake news through its platform that have even incited incidents of mob-lynching in various parts of the country.

WhatsApp Head Chris Daniels had met IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad earlier this week. After the meeting, Prasad told reporters that the government has asked WhatsApp to set up a local corporate entity and find a technology solution to trace the origin of fake messages circulated through its platform as well as appoint a grievance officer.

He acknowledged the role played by the Facebook-owned company in India's digital story, but was stern that WhatsApp could face abetment charges if it did not take action to tackle the issue of fake news being circulated on its platform.

Daniels had declined to comment on the proceedings after the meeting.

With general elections slated to be held next year in India, the government is taking a stern view of use of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp for spread of misinformation.

India is the largest market for WhatsApp with a base of over 200 million users of the over 1.5 billion global user base.

The Indian government has served two notices to WhatsApp seeking details of actions it has taken to curb the menace. In its response, WhatsApp had informed that it is building a local team, including having an India head, and has introduced new features to let its users identify forwarded messages.

WhatsApp has also restricted the number of forwards that can be done at a time.

Besides, the company is also running advocacy and education programme to help people spot fake news.

Last month, WhatsApp top executives, including COO Matthew Idema, met IT Secretary and other Indian government officials to outline various steps being taken by the company on the issue.

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