

'New setting to curb spread of fake news'

WhatsApp has said it has introduced mechanisms to curb misuse of its platform to spread rumours.

Responding to the government's letter on Tuesday, the messaging company said: "We added new protections to prevent people from adding others back into groups they had left — a form of misuse we think it is important to correct... We launched a new setting that enables administrators to decide who gets to send messages within individual groups."

The company said this would help reduce the spread of unwanted messages into important group conversations as well as forwarding of hoaxes and other content.

It said it was testing a new label in India that "highlights when a message has been forwarded versus composed by the sender".

"This could serve as an important signal for recipients to think twice before forwarding messages because it lets a user know if content they received was written by the person they know or a potential rumour from someone else." They planned to launch this feature soon.

"This year, for the first time, we also started working with fact-checking organizations to identify rumours and false news — and respond to them using WhatsApp," the company said. "For example, during the recent Presidential election in Mexico, we worked closely with the news consortium Verificado. Users sent thousands of rumours to Verificado's WhatsApp account and in turn were provided regular updates on what was accurate." In India, the fact-checking organisation Boom Live is available.

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