

Whatsapp told to find more effective solutions

Ministry of Electronics & IT

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On 3rd July 2018 MeitY had written to Whatsapp exhorting them to take immediate steps to tackle the menace of misuse of their platform wherein inflammatory messages were circulated that led to unfortunate incidents. On the same day Whatsapp responded indicating their initiative to mark forwarded messages and to step up efforts to detect fake news.

Subsequently, an unfortunate incident has occurred in Bidar where a 32 year old software engineer Mohammed Azam was killed and this was preceded by viral circulation of rumours on Whatsapp about child lifters. It is regretted that the enormity of the challenge and the rampant abuse happening in the country leading to repeated commissioning of crimes pursuant to rampant circulation of irresponsible messages in large volumes on their platform have not been addressed adequately by Whatsapp.

Reports in the media resonate the general sentiment that there is much more that needs to be done by Whatsapp. There is a need for bringing in traceability and accountability when a provocative / inflammatory message is detected and a request is made by law enforcement agencies. When rumours and fake news get propagated by mischief mongers, the medium used for such propagation cannot evade responsibility and accountability. If they remain mute spectators they are liable to be treated as abettors and thereafter face consequent legal action.

In light of the above, Whatsapp has been requested today to come out with more effective solutions that can bring in accountability and facilitate enforcement of law in addition to their efforts towards labeling forwards and identifying fake news. It has been conveyed to them in unmistakable terms that it is a very serious issue which deserves a more sensitive response.

NNK/MD

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