

GOOGLE TO HELP EC TRACK ONLINE POLITICAL ADS

Relevant for: Indian Polity & Constitution | Topic: Electoral Reforms in India

Under the scanner: Google will ensure that pre-certification covers individual and organisational advertisements. | Photo Credit: [AP](#)

With poll season round the corner, Google, which controls the lion's share of the digital advertising market, will soon be helping the Election Commission (EC) keep tabs on online political advertising. The tech giant will develop a mechanism that will not only ensure pre-certification of political advertisements but also enable it to share with the authority, details about the expenditure incurred on its platforms.

Chief Election Commissioner O.P. Rawat on Tuesday said that a Google representative met a committee that had been set up to explore possible modifications in Section 126 (election silence) and other provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 in view of the expansion and diversity of media platforms.

At the meeting, the representative told the Commission that the company would keep track of political advertisements and ensure that they are pre-certified by the EC's Media Certification and Monitoring Committees. This would entail Google asking prospective clients, whenever an order is placed, whether they have been pre-certified. The Commission is the nodal body for pre-certification of advertisements of a political nature, released by either an individual or an organisation.

Google has also assured the committee that it would set up a mechanism for sharing information on the cost of the political advertisements. This would be of use to Returning Officers when it comes to calculating the election expenditure of individual candidates.

"As soon as someone is declared a candidate for any election, all the money spent by the person for campaigning gets added as election expenditure. The Commission also asks the candidates to declare their official social media accounts," an Election Commission official said.

The EC's committee had earlier held meetings with Facebook, which has also agreed to develop tools for removing any content pertaining to election matters during the 48-hour period when the 'prohibition protocol' is in place. It is working on ways to check fake news and share details of expenditure on poll-related advertisements.

During the Karnataka Assembly polls, Facebook tied up with the Indian fact-checking agency, Boom Live, which confirmed over 50 cases of "fake news." Twitter representatives have also met the EC's committee.

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