

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1953**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 05.12.2019

**BREACH OF PRIVACY ON MESSAGING PLATFORM WHATSAPP**

**1953. SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH:**

Will the Minister of Electronics & Information Technology be pleased to state:-

(a) whether it is a fact that the Minister has stated that Government is concerned at the breach of privacy of citizens of India on the messaging platform WhatsApp and Government has asked WhatsApp to explain the kind of breach and what it is doing to safeguard it; and

(a) if so, what has been the response of the WhatsApp?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) and (b): Yes, Sir. Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) sought a report from the WhatsApp regarding breach of privacy of citizens of India on its messaging platform through an email sent to them on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 and seeking WhatsApp response by 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

WhatsApp replied on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2019 communicating the aspects relating to exploitation of a vulnerability in their platform by a spyware called Pegasus, developed by Israeli agency named NSO Group. WhatsApp stated that it is likely that Spyware Pegasus used the vulnerability in the video calling feature in the WhatsApp and that the WhatsApp user's device could be compromised even by giving a missed call. WhatsApp has informed that it is believed that around 1400 users's devices were attempted to be attacked globally including 121 users in India. It further stated that personal data of approx. 20 users in India might have been breached.

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