



## Social Media Communications Hub

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A petition has been filed and accepted in the Supreme Court against a proposal by the Centre to set up a Social Media Communications Hub.

### What is the Proposed Social Media Communications Hub?

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- It will be a platform that will allow the government to keep an eye on all social media platforms — Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn etc — and try to get a sense of the public mood, with the capability to track an individual's public posts across platforms.
- It will have the ability to collect digital media chatter from all core social media platforms and provide real-time “insights, metrics and other valuable data” to the government.
- The objective is to gauge and analyze the public sentiment towards various government policies and announcements, and track influencers.
- The platform will be able to operate in different languages such as English, Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Bengali, Punjabi, Tamil and Chinese, German, French, and Arabic.

### What are the Concerns around the Social Media Hub?

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- Concerns have been expressed about legality, privacy, and freedom of speech, If social media platforms are monitored, and there is a possibility of India ‘moving to a surveillance state’.
- Concerns have been raised about the project as illegal and unconstitutional and are contrary to the right to privacy and freedom of speech and expression.
- Since it lacks any legislative backing, oversight, and accountability; there is a possibility to profile and database social media users; and whereby it can lead to abuse of power.

- The Supreme Court in a 2017 judgment upheld privacy as a fundamental right. The judgment stated that, if the posting on social media websites are meant for only a certain audience, then it cannot be said that the general public has a right to somehow access that information and make use of it. (India Is Not A Surveillance State: SC)

## What is the Government's stand?

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- The government intends to only assess public sentiment on social media as it is a public domain and, hence, the notion that the tool will be used for mass surveillance or snooping is purely misplaced.
- Companies use such tools to find out what is the public sentiment around a particular product and the government claims it wants to only adopt a similar pattern.