Officials under cloud over encryption policy, Prasad seeks probe

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NEW DELHI: Concerned over the recent faux pas by officials in the IT department regarding the national encryption draft policy, communications minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has asked the secretary, department of electronics and information technology (DeitY), to hold an investigation and an orientation for technical officials.

On Monday, the DeitY posted the draft policy on its website, seeking public comments by October 16, 2015. The policy suggested compulsory storage of messages on WhatsApp and other platforms for 90 days by individuals. However, following public uproar and intervention from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the IT ministry on Tuesday withdrew the draft policy.

A spokesperson for the IT ministry confirmed that Prasad held parleys with the IT secretary.

IT secretary JS Deepak, did not respond to calls and sms from HT.

According to a senior official in the communications ministry, Prasad has asked the IT secretary



Prasad: cracking down

the secretary the person(s) responsible for the mismanagement should be identified and given orientation," the official said.

Prasad has instructed the IT secretary to sensitise the officials on the dynamics of social media. However, there won't be any witch-hunt, the official said. "It will be merely an advisory to the officials who have faulted," he added.

Prasad has acknowledged in public that a few terms which were used could have been avoided.

Commenting on the flip-flop, SD Saxena, former finance director, BSNL, said: "It (the faux pas on the encryption policy) is a classic case of communication gap between the technical people and bureaucrats." The draft is not a document prepared by an to conduct an enquiry, but not to take any harsh action. "He told individuai, but a team or officials and bureaucrats, Saxena added.