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House committee mulls action against Amazon

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Facebook India's policy head Ankhi Das on Friday appeared before the Joint Committee of Parliament that is examining the draft Data Protection Bill. However, e-commerce giant Amazon declined to depose before the panel on October 28, stating that its "subjects experts" cannot take the risk of traveling from the U.S. during the coronavirus pandemic.

Stating that Amazon's "refusal" amounts to a breach of parliamentary privilege, BJP MP and chairperson of the JPC, Meenakshi Lekhi, told reporters that the panel was unanimous about taking "coercive action" if no one from the company appears next Wednesday.

Amazon, Twitter, Facebook, Google and Paytm are

among the companies from whom the committee has sought views on data security and protection amid concerns that the privacy of users is being "compromised" for commercial interest.

The panel questioned Facebook India's representatives, including Ms. Das, who has been in the eye of a storm over reports of alleged bias towards the BJP and refusal to apply hate speech rules to a BJP politician.

The discussions within the JPC, however, were strictly confined to the Data Protection Bill. "They told the panel that Facebook does not sell data but arrived at inferences based on user behaviour. So, we asked them if they obtain the consent of the users even to do this," a JPC member told *The Hindu*.