Debunk all fake news stories.
Read what's real.

TOI FACT CHECK

Reality.
Check.
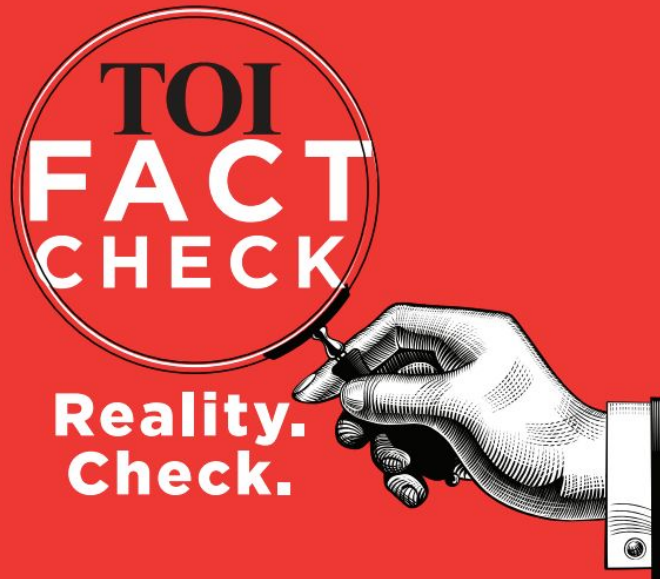
Times Fact Check

Facts matter, not people

Overview

Times Fact Check is an initiative from India's largest digital media company, Times Internet to fight the menace of fake news and misinformation that spreads on the internet like wildfire. Times Fact Check is the largest fact-checking initiative in India with stories published in English, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

Times Fact Check has a microsite of its own hosted on timesofindia.com and has verified, Twitter and Facebook accounts. Any concerned citizen can alert the team about fake news at **timesfactcheck@timesinternet.in** and/or get clarification from them about stories that appear dodgy, before carrying it in respective publications. In a short period of time, Times Fact Check has established itself as one of the most-trusted, non-partisan fact checkers, loved and loathed by people from both sides of the political spectrum.

Goals

1. Stop the influx of fake news and misformation into the Indian media culture
2. Establish a culture of fact-based reporting with multiple checks in place to inform and educate the Indian reader

Process @ Times Fact Check

In an ideal situation, fake news should be killed before it goes viral, but in most cases, the fake news seem to have reached a lot of people. However, with the kind of reach Times of India and other TIL properties enjoy, it is safe to assume that the fact-check stories reach as many people as fake news do.

Spotting Stories

Times Fact Check team is active across all major social media platforms. It keeps an eye on informed shared by politicians, influencers, celebrities, Times Group publications and other news outlets. Once a story is spotted, thorough background checks are done to get a sense of whether the fake news is going viral. Accordingly, the decision to bust the story is taken.

There have been times when influencers and random social media users have alerted the team about certain stories. Such stories are dealt with additional care to ensure we do not fall for propaganda. Times Fact Check is strictly non-partisan - only facts matter, not people.

Approaching Stories

The first and foremost characteristic of a fact-checker is doubting and questioning everything. We take everything with a pinch of salt and ensure to carry only those stories we could verify 100 per cent.

Verification

Fact-checking is not always about the skill to use internet to find proof. Its roots are safe in good-old journalism where no story is put out without confirming the information is true, verifying it again, cross-checking with old data / people responsible, and then coming to a rational decision. In most cases, it is about common sense. There are different tools Times Fact Check employs to verify the information and claims that are doing the rounds on social media.

1) Talking to relevant people: Information is confirmed from authentic, reliable sources. In cases of law and order, police is contacted, and similarly, relevant government departments and private institutions are contacted. In cases when the sources request anonymity, we comply to ensure their well being.

2) Google search: Searches on Google using the right keywords bring a lot of information to the table. It is up to the fact-checkers to figure out the correct keywords to search with. Old newspaper reports, published papers and photographs could be found using simple Google searches.

3) Google reverse-image search: On Chrome browser, one can simply right click on any image and select 'Search Google for image' option. Alternatively, the image could be saved into the system and uploaded on images.google.com to search the internet for it. In cases where there is an intuition that the image is digitally manipulated, images could be cropped in different ways and searched for. Google reverse-image search, in most cases, solves the fact-checking since Google throws the most relevant articles / images when searched that could be used to debunk the misinformation.

4) InVid Verification tool (Google extension): InVid is an open-source video / image verification tool that is designed for journalists to help them get 'contextual information' about Facebook / YouTube / Instagram / Twitter / Dailymotion videos, and to perform reverse-image search on Google, Baidu or Yandex search engines.

5) Picking up hints from videos/images: Careful inspection of images and videos gives cues about the time and place it was shot at. This may include anything from the angle of the shadow, the direction of wind, precipitation, time on watch / clock, number on the number plates of vehicles, language on sign boards, vehicles, hoardings, name boards etc..

6) Twitter & Facebook searches: In most cases, we use the search option within social media platforms. This is done usually to see how many people have shared the same video / image / claim. We also use this to figure out who started spreading misinformation.

7) Editing software: Depending on the requirement we use editing software, both video and photo, to analyse the material we have got. It could be to see if the image is digitally manipulated or to figure out what exactly are people saying in the background in a video we need to check (by amplifying the sound using the software).

8) Google Earth, Google Maps, Street view: We can put geolocation tools like Google Earth, Google Maps and its street view to our benefit in some cases. For instance, we can measure the distance from point A to point B, analyse average traffic and figure out how much time a person would take to get from point A to point B. In cases where we want to see the elevation of a particular building, we can use Google Earth and view the building from different angles.

9) Combination of tools: Depending on the requirement and complexity of the information to be verified, we employ a combination of methods.

10) Corrections: If in case, Times Fact Check gets any data / information inaccurate, we will accept the mistake and correct the story we published with a proper Editor's Note. Corrections policy is aligned with the Times Of India's corrections policy. We listen to feedback on social media and those that are mailed to us.

Ethics

Times Fact Check was constituted on a basic principle - **facts matter, not people**. This principle automatically makes Times Fact Check non-partisan. The team members do not bring in their personal biases and opinions to their journalism, because the moment that comes in, the purpose of fact-checking, and journalism, will be defeated. Times Fact Check, as a policy, does not put out anything that is not hundred percent verified.

Ground Rules

Every story is checked at least four times - once right after writing it, once by a colleague, once after publishing (on a computer) and once on the TOI app. There have been many stories that were done first by TFC which were later picked up by other fact-checking websites.

Milestones

Times Fact Check is spreading its wings and gearing up to aggressively get into more genres and be the market leader in all the above genres. The following 5 stories give a glimpse into TFC's body of work:

I. **Vinod Dua airs doctored video to suggest Gadkari attacked NDA govt**

    https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/fake-vinod-dua-airs-doctored-video-to-su ggest-ga dkari-attacked-nda-government/articleshow/67230278.cms

II. **Pak journalist Hamid Mir's tweet with video showing man being tortured has nothing to do with Indian Army**

     https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/fake-video-tweeted-by-hamid-mir-showin g-man-b eing-tortured-by-soliders-is-not-of-indian-army/articleshow/65933483.cms

III. **Truth behind viral WhatsApp message warning about Blue Whale Challenge**

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/fact-check-truth-behind-viral-whatsapp-message- warning-about-blue-whale-challenge/articleshow/66917031.cms

IV.   Were 1,000 trees felled to make helipad in Odisha ahead of PM Modi's visit?

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/fact-check-were-1000-trees-felled-to-make-helipad-in-odisha-ahead-of-pm-modis-visit/articleshow/67554564.cms?

V.   5 times when bogus warnings triggered scare about food quality in India

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/5-times-when-bogus-warnings-triggered-scare-ab%20out-food-quality-in-india/articleshow/67624053.cms?utm_campaign=andapp&utm_medium%20=referral&utm_source=native_share_tray