

China tightens rules for online news providers

BEIJING - China has issued new internet regulations increasing Communist party control over online news providers, the latest step in the country's push to tighten its policing of the web.



Picture: [AFP](#)

The ruling party oversees a vast apparatus designed to censor online content deemed politically sensitive, maintaining that such measures are necessary for the protection of national security.

Sites blocked due to their content or sensitivity, among them Facebook and Twitter, cannot be accessed in China without special software that allows users to bypass the strict controls.

New regulations released by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) Tuesday will increase party control over who can publish what online, taking effect June 1.

All websites, apps, forums, blogs, microblogs, social media accounts, instant messaging and live streaming platforms and other entities that select or edit news will need a license to post reports or commentary about the government, economy,

military, foreign affairs, and social issues, the CAC said.

Such online news service providers must "correctly guide public opinion" and "serve the cause of socialism" while "safeguarding national and public interests", it said.

Business and editorial operations must be kept separate, and those who do not receive public funding will not be allowed to conduct original reporting, it added.

Staff at online outlets must undergo governmental training and assessment, and receive official accreditation, while top editors must be approved.

Additionally, no Chinese outlets may set up a joint venture with a foreign partner without undergoing a "security assessment" through the State Council Information Office. Online news providers who fail to comply with the new regulations will have their licenses revoked and receive fines of up to 30,000 yuan (\$4,352).

The new guidelines come after the passing of a controversial cybersecurity bill last November, which also tightened restrictions on online freedom of speech. Paris-based monitoring group Reporters Without Borders last week ranked China as the fifth worst country in the world for press freedom, coming in 176th out of 180 countries, just one place ahead of war-torn Syria.

Source: AFP

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