

PTA orders blocking of scandalous stuff on internet

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LAHORE: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has ordered all Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block numerous scandalous internet sites, specifically the audio recording of a sensual conversation between two sitting parliamentarians.

The footage of a press conference in which a lady TV artist claimed that she and a man working with a state organisation have secretly got married and they have a son, is also to be blocked.

In an email directive to all ISPs issued by Mohammad Ali, Deputy Director Enforcement, PTA has asked them to ensure the blocking of desired web links immediately and report through return email positively. Besides many other undesired links, the official sources said that PTA is emphasising more on blocking a video clip of a press conference of a lady TV anchor levelling serious allegations on a boss of a TV channel of betraying her and a website containing audio recording of sensual conversation between two notable opposition politicians of the country belonging to the same opposition party.

This is the first time in last many years that PTA has moved swiftly to order blocking of scandalous websites.

Wahajus Siraj, Convener ISP Association of Pakistan (ISPAK), while talking to The News said, "PTA and MOIT's process on ordering of blocking of websites have become non-transparent and questionable as it seems that Inter-Ministerial Committee is being used as tool

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to censor internet for political gains instead of going after anti-Pakistan or blasphemous websites."

"Inclusion of representatives of internet industry and civil society in Inter-Ministerial Committee to make the process transparent has been a long-standing demand of ISPAK," Wahaj said.

Another leading internet service provider said on the condition of not being named that with five GSM service providers and numerous broadband service providers it's a challenge to implement the same set of restrictions since every internet service provider has a different set of technology for content control mechanism.

"Blocking the most popular social media sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter can create a major unrest among millions of subscribers on one hand while on the other blocking these popular sites will also have a direct impact on the revenue of the internet service provider companies which belong to one of the largest text paying verticals in Pakistan," said the same internet service provider.

Both the DG Enforcement (PTA) Col Yawar and DD Muhammad Ali who issued directives to ISPs for the blocking of scandalous sites refused to talk on the issue.