



The govt's voice: Ban on porn.

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Modi govt ban on porn: Storm on Twitter; violates right to personal liberty

Ban on porn anti-freedom, impractical: Chetan Bhagat

👤 Agency Report | 📍 New Delhi | 📅 3 August, 2015 | ⌚ 11:40 PM

The government's decision to clamp down on porn sites across the country has not gone down well with Twitterati, with the ban becoming a top talking trend.

People took to the micro-blogging site to sarcastically suggest the Narendra Modi government about the things it should ban in the coming days. #NextBanIdea, the hashtag used by people, was a top trend till 6 p.m.

"They will control what u watch, what u eat, whom u should love or get married, what u should wear... #NextBanIdea – Ban life," @saurabh009 tweeted.

"Ban all those relatives who want you married when you're single and divorced when you're married. #NextBanIdea," @thakurain tweeted.

"Govt should make a committee which decides what to ban next and it should ban itself. Problem solved. #NextBanIdea," @bakwasradio said.

"Aunties that say "kitna badaa ho gaya hai!" to you. #NextBanIdea," @pranavsapra tweeted.

"#NextBanIdea modi's foreign trip, n speeches," @spandey2004 said.

People were unhappy after the government banned porn sites across the country.

Author Chetan Bhagat criticised the government's decision to make porn sites inaccessible in India, and called it an "anti-freedom and impractical" move.

“Porn ban is anti-freedom, impractical, not enforceable. Politically not very smart too. Avoidable. Let’s not manage people’s private lives,” Bhagat said on the micro-blogging site Twitter.

As per reports, most internet service providers — including Vodafone, MTNL and BSNL — are showing blank pages instead of porn sites. The matter came to the limelight late on Saturday, when a number of internet users across the country could not access pornographic websites.

Bhagat further said that instead of banning porn, the government should “ban men ogling”, “molesting”, and “raping women”.

“Don’t ban porn. Ban men ogling, leering, brushing past, groping, molesting, abusing, humiliating and raping women. Ban non-consent. Not sex,” he wrote on Twitter.

Filmmaker Onir too shared a post on his Twitter page against this ban.

“Would #Kamasutra books be banned for propagating #Unnaturalsex ? #pornban”, he wrote.

Earlier on Sunday, filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma loathed the move and said “depriving consenting adults” of watching porn is equivalent to what “Taliban and ISIS is doing to freedom”.

The hashtag #PornBan became a top Twitter trend on Sunday morning. Now, #NextBanIdea is trending on the social media site, with many users posting sarcastic tweets as to what the government should ban next.

“Dear politicians, why the idea of banning corruption never crosses your mind,” wrote a Twitter user, while another Twitter user said: “#NextBanIdea Elections! Democracy already seems dead.”

With the central government banning some of the pornographic websites, experts believe that accessing the blocked stuff on the Internet, is not difficult as many free proxy and virtual private network (VPN) services make it available for the eager user.

The ministry of communications and information and technology, in its order of July 31 under section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act 2000 banned 857 websites terming their content “immoral and indecent”.

Sources in the government, however, denied that there was any crackdown. They said denial of access at department of telecom’s (DoT) instance was “temporary, insisting that it was a prelude to the creation of a regular regulatory oversight.

They said the directive was necessitated by the Supreme Court’s observations last month over the home ministry’s failure in blocking child pornography on several sites, and claimed that the idea was not to “black out or police what people did in their bedrooms.” The government order seem to target many sites which have nothing to do with child pornography.

Experts say there’s always a workaround for accessing blocked website as long as it’s there on the Internet. “The easiest method would be to make use of proxies and VPN’s. Many proxy and VPN services make it possible to access the banned stuff with complete anonymity on the Internet,” Hoshie Ghaswalla, CEO of media business for CyberMedia said.

“Accessing blocked websites is even easier on android devices thanks to a free VPN apps. Apart from the basic VPN feature, the app even allows you to switch countries with ease, which makes it easy to bypass geographically blocked websites,” he added.

Advocating individual’s right to have access to adult contents, Karnika Seth, Cyberlaw expert and chairperson of the Lex Cyberia said that viewing adult content by adult is not illegal but its transmission/publishing is.

“Supreme Court is deciding the matter involving child pornography materials freely available online and its directions are for blocking them and not adult sites simpliciter as viewing adult content by adult is not illegal. Its transmission/publishing, though, surely is. Most of these sites are hosted from abroad,” Seth said.

The Supreme Court in its observation on the issue on July 8 had said banning such sites would be violation of an individual’s right to liberty.

“Such interim orders cannot be passed by this court. Somebody can come to the court and say Look, I am an adult and how can you stop me from watching it within the four walls of my room? It is a violation of Article 21 (right to personal liberty) of the constitution,” Chief Justice of India H.L. Dattu said while hearing a petition of an Indore-based advocate Kamlesh Vaswani, who wanted blocking of all porn sites.

According to telecom operators who have received notices from the telecom department, the government has asked Internet service providers (ISPs) to block hundreds of adult websites,

While some telecom operators have already complied with the government order to block certain websites, the rest are expected to implement the order in a day or two. A senior executive at one of the major ISPs said that the order was received late on Friday and that the company was in the process of implementing it. He declined to be identified.

While the government hasn't said anything publicly on the censorship, access to popular pornography websites seems to have been restricted by several ISPs. Critics of the government's move said the state should stop interfering with what adults are doing privately.

The Cellular Operators Association Of India (COAI) said it was not possible to block all the sites immediately. "We have to block each site one by one and it will take a few days for all service providers to block all the sites," a COAI member said requesting anonymity.

Telecom service providers including Bharti Airtel, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular refused to comment on this. (IANS)

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