
China to Crack Down on Censor-Busting Services

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China is cracking down on the hi-tech ways citizens avoid official scrutiny of what they do online.

The nation's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has announced plans to "clean up" unauthorised internet connections.

The 14-month campaign will target the virtual private networks (VPNs) and dedicated lines many use to go online.

All these types of service must be officially vetted to keep operating, said the Ministry.

In its notice, the Ministry said China's net connection market was "disordered" and needed regulating.

In a bid to sort out the situation it said it was embarking on the long term plan to bring some order to the way people go online. Net connection firms and the other ways people get online would be scrutinised, it said.

China uses many different technologies to police what people say online and which sites they can visit. Many sites popular outside the country, such as Facebook and YouTube, are blocked or restricted to those behind what is known as China's "great firewall".

To get around that virtual edifice many people use VPNs, which are a secure connection between a device and another computer over the internet, to effectively connect directly to a computer outside China that handles traffic between them and the sites they want to reach.

Many businesses also use VPNs to help staff connect to corporate networks and to limit the amount of confidential data travelling over public networks.

The VPNs used by individuals and businesses, as well as dedicated leased lines, must now get official permission to operate.

The campaign is the latest in a long series of attempts by Chinese authorities to stop people using VPNs and other filter-busting systems.

Reporting on the crackdown, the **South China Morning Post** said the move was linked to wider efforts to manage the information available online ahead of a Communist Party congress which will see a "major reshuffle" of party leadership.