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GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(IT & TELECOM DIVISION)

No.5-1/2005-DFU

Islamabad, June---, 2010

SUBJECT: POLICY GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE MONITORING & CONTROL OF BLASPHEMOUS / OFFENSIVE CONTENT OVER INTERNET IN PAKISTAN

The recent appearance of blasphemous and sacrilegious content at mass level over internet has created immense discomfort and dismay among the Government and people of Pakistan. During the process of blocking such content, it was observed that the dissemination of such content is extremely fast and any objectionable material produced on single website is replicated on thousands of other allied websites within no time. Also, the technical innovation and development in the field of computer networking has made it possible to access any content with different applications. It has therefore become imperative to have an effective mechanism to continuously monitor and control the objectionable / obnoxious content over internet in Pakistan.

2. Although the inter-ministerial committee for the evaluation of websites constituted by the Prime Minister of Pakistan is efficiently evaluating the websites on case to case basis, the Honorable Lahore High court vide his decision on W.P.NO. 10392/2010 dated 31 May 2010 (Copy Attached), has desired to broaden the scope of monitoring and control of objectionable contents over internet in Pakistan.

3. In the view of the importance of monitoring to restrict any offensive / blasphemous content over the internet in Pakistan for the sake of National Security and communal harmony and in line with the decision of Honorable Lahore High Court, Ministry of IT, being the Federal Government for IT and Telecom Sectors, hereby issues following policy guidelines:

i. PTA shall establish a complaint cell to avoid access of offensive information from public domain and take preventive measures to block the same.

ii. Any website at URL level or IP level shall be blocked, after proper investigation by the Inter- Ministerial Committee for the evaluation of Websites at the receipt of information or complaint from any source, as soon as such information received by Ministry of IT / PTA .

iii. The committee will evaluate the reported content provided through the internet with the view to determine its suitability for display or hosting it on Pakistani portals.

iv. On the recommendation of the committee, Federal Government shall issue directive to PTA for blocking of the website(s) either at IP level or URL which contain the following:

- ✓ a. All information pertaining to any objectionable content
- b. Undermine Islam or ridicule, disparage or attack any religion, ethnic group, region, or any group's reverend practices.
- c. Brings contempt to the country or its people so as to undermine integrity and solidarity of the state / country.
- d. Violates any provision of the constitution of Pakistan or law of the land.
- e. Promotes or supports sedition, terrorism, anarchy or violence in the country;

- f. Brings contempt of the Defense Forces, Police, Air force or any other institution of Government of Pakistan or to divulge any secret information relating to Defense and other services;
 - g. Contains propaganda in favor of any foreign state having bearing on any point of disputes or against any friendly foreign state;
 - h. Hurts national sentiments.
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- v. In case of any information received by complaint cell in respect of information as given in Para 3(iv) above will be blocked as soon as possible but not later than 24 hours subject to approval of evaluation committee.
 - vi. The committee will refer all objectionable websites to PTA for blockage of such websites or URLs through its telecom licensees as the case may be.
 - vii. In case of any criminal proceeding the committee will forward the cases to FIA to take action under the relevant law. However, PTA will provide information through its licensees to FIA in such cases.
4. This Policy Directive is issued with the approval of competent authority for the implementation with immediate effect.

(Mushtaq Ahmad Bhatti)
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