



Information & Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA)

ICTA

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Our Ref: ICTA/ED/May-15/04

12 May 2015

Mr. Ish Sookun
Email: ish@hacklog.in

Dear Mr Sookun,

Re: National Internet Filtering System

Your mail dated 10th May 2015 regarding the above subject matter refers.

The Authority takes strong objection to the allegation that "... *the ICT Authority decides to "spy" the Mauritian Internet Users?*"

The Authority wishes to draw your attention to the fact that in pursuance of a Government project which was implemented under s. 18 of the ICT Act 2001 (as amended) coupled with s. 14 of the Child Protection Act, a Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) filtering tool has been implemented. This project was preceded by a series of discussions and dialogues with various stakeholders namely the Data Protection Office, Ombudsperson for Children, the Internet Service Providers, the Police, the media and representatives of consumer organisations.

A copy of a press release dated 7th February 2011 together with a copy of FAQ which are still available for consultation on the website of the Authority are annexed for your ease of reference.

You may further wish to note that the present solution can be used solely for the purposes of filtering Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) websites i.e. websites which depict images of child pornography, including video, photos and text articles, all of which are illegal in Mauritius.

We hope that this clarification has replied your query satisfactorily and we kindly invite you to stop the campaign of gratuitous false allegations against the Authority.

Kind Regards

Dr. M K Oolun
Executive Director

Encs

cc. Permanent Secretary, MTCI

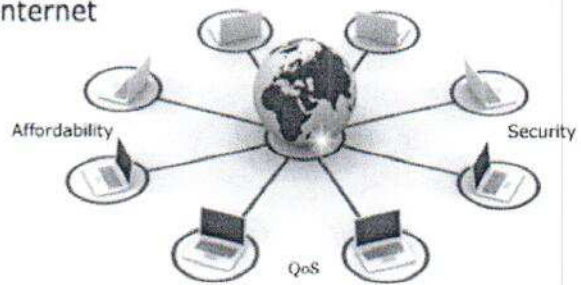


INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AUTHORITY

Regulating to capitalize on the potential of the digital world

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Internet



The ICT Authority is the national regulator for the ICT sector and Postal Services in Mauritius.

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1. What is a URL?

URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator. It is an internet address (for example, <http://www.icta.mu/internet>), usually consisting of the access protocol (e.g. *http*), the domain name (e.g. *www.icta.mu*), and optionally, the path to a file or resource residing on that server (e.g. *internet* for the address given above).

2. What is an internet service provider?

An internet service provider (ISP) is a company, organisation or other entity which provides a person or a device access to the internet, internet connectivity and other related services (e.g. hosting websites).

3. What is an online content filtering system?

An online filtering system is a piece of hardware or software or a combination of both that acts as a shield between the Internet and a user's computer, thus filtering access to potentially objectionable or offensive material. Most content filter manufacturers compile a list of sites they deem objectionable and classify them under different profiles, which often pertain to the end user's age.

4. Which laws are relevant?

Section 15 of the Child Protection Act 1994 as amended, whereby emphasis is laid on "indecent photographs of children" and section 18(1)(m) of the ICT Act 2001 as amended where one of the functions of the ICT Authority is to take steps to regulate or curtail harmful and illegal content on Internet and other information and communication services.

5. Why implement the CSA filtering system?

Under section 18 (1) (m) of the ICT Act 2001, one of the functions of the ICT Authority is to take steps to regulate or curtail harmful and illegal content on the Internet and other information and communication services. Thus the contents being filtered out by the system are materials that fall within the ambit of Section 15 of the Child Protection Act.

6. What is the purpose of this filtering system?

The aim is to reduce the availability and circulation of child sexual abuse images and limit the trauma experienced by victims' when such images circulate on the internet. At the same time, this system protects against accidental viewing, giving people in Mauritius the confidence in the Internet they deserve.

7. Where is the system hosted?

The system setup is presently hosted at the ICT Authority and is connected to local ISPs providing internet access to the public in Mauritius.

8. Which ISPs use the filter?

Emtel Ltd, Data Communications Ltd, Mauritius Telecom. In fact, all Internet traffic coming into Mauritius are filtered out for CSA contents.

9. What system is used to do the filtering?

The software is Netclean Whitebox, the leader in providing child online safety protection.

10. What sites are being stopped by this filtering system?

The NetClean WhiteBox solution uses a URL black list containing the addresses of sites that are to be filtered. This URL filtering list emanates from the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a non profit organisation that is widely recognised as one of the best in the world at managing a URL list of CSA sites coupled with the Interpol blacklist.

11. Is it possible to modify the URL blacklist?

No, the list is automatically updated on a regular basis remotely by the online CSA filtering solution provider and modification of this list is not possible. Access or modification to the blacklist is not possible locally.

12. What happens if a user logs in to a banned site?

You will see a message saying that access to the site has been banned. Instead an ICTA blockpage will be displayed.

13. What happens if there are multiple sites on a server and only one of them is banned?

The filter is applied at the level of the internet address but it is common for a web server to host multiple websites on a single internet address. All requests to any of the sites on one of the filtered internet addresses will be diverted to the filtering server.

The filtering server then looks at the request. If it is to a banned site, the request is refused and a message is sent back to the person. The remaining sites which are not banned can still be viewed.

:: Search this site

Search

14. What happens if the website has a mixture of legal and illegal content?

It is possible to filter down to the level of folders or even individual documents and images on a website. E.g. you could filter <http://www.website.com/badcontent> but allow <http://www.website.com/goodcontent>.

15. Will internet filtering slow down the internet?

The filtering is implemented in such a way that it has very little effect on the passage of most network traffic meaning that there is little downgrade on performance.

16. What types of materials are filtered?


The filtering solution is used to filter only child pornography including video, photos, and text articles.

17. Is it possible to check whether a website is on the filtered list?

The only way to check whether the website is filtered is by attempting to access it.

18. Does this stop even the most determined people from looking at sexually abusive images of children?


This initiative is one element in a wider effort to combat the making and distribution of images of child sexual abuse via the Internet and the activities of determined criminals who exploit internet-based technologies and services to this end. Filtering is designed to protect people from inadvertent access to potentially criminal images of child sexual abuse. No known technology is capable of effectively denying determined criminals who are actively seeking such material; only removal of the content at source can achieve that goal.



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Publications & ICT Laws




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ICTA to launch Online Content Filtering System to filter access to Child Sexual Abuse sites for Internet Users

Port Louis : In the context of Safer Internet Day, the ICT Authority will be launching a centralised Online Content Filtering solution to filter access to child sexual abuse (CSA) sites for Internet users in Mauritius . The mechanism forms part of the wide ranging functions of the Authority. Under section 18 (1) m provides the Authority with the mandate to "take steps to regulate or curtail harmful and illegal content on Internet and other information and communication services" and is in line with Section 14 of the Child Protection Act.

Honourable Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum, Minister of Information and Communication Technology will officially launch the Online Content Filtering solution at the seat of the ICT Authority at 14.00 hours on Tuesday 8 th February 2011.

The Online Content Filtering project will enable the filtering of access to websites depicting Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) for Mauritian users. This ICTA project is the result of a consultative process with stakeholders concerned with the protection of children against child sexual abuse sites.

Editor's Note

The ICT Authority has chosen the Netclean Whitebox technology which was developed specifically for this task in 2006. This Child Sexual Abuse filtering system is presently hosted at the ICT Authority and is connected to all local ISPs providing Internet access to the public in Mauritius .

The system is based on a hybrid Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) and Uniform Resource Locator (URL) filtering system. The first step involves a server containing the list of blocked sites (blacklist) which checks the IP addresses of these sites and advertises the routes for these sites to go to a filtering server hosted at the ICT Authority rather than the destination web site. The second step is where the filtering server checks the URL against a blacklist using packet inspection and if blocked, then the request is not passed on to the destination web site but redirected to a blocking server and displays a blocked page. If the site is not on the list, the filter passes the request as normal and the site is accessed by the ISP customer ("clean traffic"). The URL filtering list for this component will be the list established by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a non - profit organization that is widely recognised as one of the best in the world at managing a URL list of CSA sites coupled with the Interpol blacklist.

7 February 2011

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