

China orders online sellers to register details

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A Beijing office worker surfs the internet in the Chinese capital. Online sellers in the country will have to provide their real names and addresses or pay hefty fines under new rules introduced Thursday, in the latest moves designed to tighten control of the web.

Online sellers in China will have to provide their real names and addresses or pay hefty fines under new rules introduced Thursday, in Beijing's latest move to tighten control of the web.

Individuals wanting to sell products or services on the Internet now have to submit their personal details to online retail websites such as Taobao or [eBay](#), according to the rules issued by the State Administration for Industry and Commerce.

The government has the right to fine individuals up to 10,000 yuan (1,470 dollars) if they fail to provide their personal information to the website operators, the government department said.

Retail websites could also face fines of up to 30,000 yuan if they neglect to register the details of sellers or refuse to hand over such information to authorities investigating illegal business activities.

Internet shopping is seeing huge growth in China thanks to expanding use of the web and of bank and credit cards, as well as rising confidence in the safety of online payments.

China has the world's largest population of [Internet users](#), estimated at 404 million people, according to official figures.

China operates a vast system of [web censorship](#), sometimes referred to as the "Great Firewall," that blocks access to or censors content deemed unacceptable, ranging from pornography to political dissent.

In a move seen as a further tightening measure, state media reported in May that authorities would introduce a system requiring [web users](#) to provide their real names before posting comments online.

The issue has sparked fierce debate since it was first raised several years ago, due to concerns at the impact on freedom of speech and privacy.

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