

Official: Google's China changes in line with law

July 20 2010, By JOE McDONALD , AP Business Writer

(AP) -- China renewed Google's Internet license after it pledged to obey censorship laws and stop automatically switching mainland users to its unfiltered Hong Kong site, an official said Tuesday.

It was Beijing's first public comment on its decision to allow [Google](#) to continue operating a [China](#) website following a public clash over censorship. The company closed its China [search engine](#) in March but still offers music and other services in China.

Google promised to "obey Chinese law" and avoid linking to material deemed a threat to national security or social stability, said Zhang Feng, director of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Telecoms Development Department, at a news conference.

Zhang also cited Google's planned "rectification and reform," apparently a reference to the U.S. search giant's commitment in its June 29 renewal application to stop switching users automatically to its Hong Kong search site.

"The rectification and reform in the annual application basically conforms to regulation," Zhang said.

The dispute threatened to shut Google out of China's fast-growing Internet market while also depriving the communist government of an important source of technology in an industry that Beijing is pushing hard to develop.

Google's announcement in January that it might shut down in its China search engine because it no longer wanted to censor results prompted an outcry by Internet users who pleaded with the company to stay.

The communist government promotes Internet use for business and education but tries to block access to material considered subversive or pornographic.

Google closed its China search engine March 22 and started switching users automatically to Hong Kong, which is Chinese territory but has Western-style civil liberties. Google said that was a proposed compromise to uphold the principle of free access to information while obeying Chinese law.

The company said regulators objected to the automatic switching and threatened to revoke its Chinese license if it continued. Google's China site now includes a tab for users to click to be switched to Hong Kong.

"As for the question of Hong Kong, this a matter of the company's internal business conduct," Zhang said.

China is not yet a big moneymaker for Google, accounting for an estimated \$250 million to \$600 million of Google's projected \$28 billion in revenue this year. But industry analysts said the loss of its China platform would have hampered its ability to profit from the expected future growth of the market.

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