

India gov't agrees to prosecute Google, Facebook

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India's government authorised on Friday the prosecution of 21 Internet firms including Facebook and Google in a case over obscene content posted online, two sources told AFP.

The approval could lead to company directors being called to a trial court in New Delhi to answer serious charges such as fomenting religious hatred and spreading social discord, an official and a lawyer said.

A criminal case against the companies was first brought by journalist Vinay Rai who complained that the websites were responsible for obscene and offensive material posted by users.

He also complained that they had broken laws designed to maintain religious harmony in India, a more serious offense that requires [government approval](#) to be admitted in court.

"We had applied for the government's sanction and the ministry of communication and IT has filed it directly in the metropolitan magistrate's court," Rai's lawyer Sashi Prakash Tripathi told AFP.

A source in the ministry, who asked not to be named because he was unauthorised to speak to the media, confirmed to AFP that approval had been given.

The Internet companies targeted have already filed a petition in the

Delhi High Court seeking to have the lower court's case against them stayed. The hearing of the petition is to resume on Monday.

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