Google still blocked, despite company officials' visit: Cuba

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Executive Chairman of Google Eric Schmidt speaks in Hong Kong on November 4, 2013

Much of Google remains off limits to Internet users in Cuba, despite a recent visit here by top executives from the popular site, state-run media complained on Wednesday.

Google's executive chairman Eric Schmidt paid a two-day visit to the

Americas' only communist-run country last week along with three other officials from the company, which has been accused by Havana of "scandalously" blocking some of its services.

The paper said that the viral excitement that the visit generated had less to do with the executives than the fact that Cuba was "one of the few nations in the world where a good part of the country can't get access to the Internet giant."

This was because Cuba is "subject to the unjust laws of the US blockade," it said.

Google Analytics and Google Chrome are unavailable, the paper wrote, adding that "Cubans cannot freely download the millions of existing apps in the Android operating system's official store."

US-based Schmidt confirmed the trip in a Google+ posting Sunday, saying US sanctions on Cuba defied reason.

"Cuba will have to open its political and business economy, and the US will have to overcome our history and open the embargo. Both countries have to do something that is hard to do politically, but it will be worth it," Schmidt argued.

Cuban independent online newspaper "14yMedio," which has been intermittently blocked in Cuba and is run by dissident blogger Yoani Sanchez, described the visit as one meant to "promote the virtues of a free and open Internet."

An underwater cable connecting Cuba to Venezuela opened possibilities to upgrade Internet service starting in 2013.

However, Cuban authorities said financial limitations stopped them from

increasing access, and continued with their policy of prioritizing use for universities, research institutes and state entities.

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