

Google shifts China engine to HK

Written by Taipei Times

Wednesday, 24 March 2010 08:08 -

Google's partial withdrawal from the China market yesterday brought swift condemnation from the government while leaving Chinese Web surfers to wonder whether they would be able to access a new offshore search engine site or be blocked by censors.

Google's decision to move most of its China-based search functions to Hong Kong opened a new phase in a two-month-long fracas pitting the world's most powerful Internet company against a government that tightly restricts the Web in the planet's most populous market.

A few Chinese passers-by laid flowers or chocolates on the large metal "Google" sign outside the company's office building in Beijing. Many Chinese felt caught in the middle, admiring Google for taking a stand against censorship but wondering whether the government might further punish the company.

"I don't know what the Chinese government will do to Google next," said Zhou Shuguang, a well-known blogger who uses the online name "Zuola." "But I welcome the move and support Google because an uncensored search engine is something that I need."

Google announced early yesterday that its Chinese search engine, google.cn, would automatically redirect queries to its service in Hong Kong, where Google is not legally required to censor searches.

The move, in effect, shifts the responsibility for censoring from Google to the government.

Beijing responded swiftly, testily declaring that Google violated commitments it made to abide by China's censorship rules when it entered the China market in 2006.

"This is totally wrong. We're uncompromisingly opposed to the politicization of commercial issues, and express our discontent and indignation to Google for its unreasonable accusations and conducts," an official with the Internet bureau of the State Council Information Office, was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency.

Google's move marks only a partial retreat. It's leaving behind a research and sales division. Its map services and a free, advertiser-supported music portal still have their servers in China, and its Gmail e-mail service remains available too.

Playing down the friction with Google and with Washington, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang (秦刚) said China had a right to filter content deemed harmful to society and national security and Google's response should not harm wider relations with the US.

"The Google incident is just an individual action taken by a business company, and I can't see its impact on China-US relations unless someone wants to politicize that," Qin said at a routine media briefing.

Google's strategy leaves the google.com.hk search engine vulnerable to a total blockade.

Google shifts China engine to HK

Written by Taipei Times

Wednesday, 24 March 2010 08:08 -

Despite reports saying a move was imminent, Google's decision caught many Chinese users by surprise.

He Xinliang, an employee at an Internet security company in Xian, first realized something had changed when he clicked on google.cn but found himself on the Hong Kong site.

"I was more or less mentally prepared for this because it's been a hot topic for a while, but I was still just a little surprised," said He, who regularly uses Gmail, Google Docs and Google Calendar. "At least the page is still in simplified Chinese."

Initial post-move plans were broken to some of Google's 600 Chinese staff at a meeting held in the first-floor cafeteria of Google's Beijing office, company spokeswoman Jessica Powell said.

"We haven't worked out all the details so we can't ever rule out letting people go, but we very much want to avoid that," Powell said. "The sales presence to a certain degree could depend on the success of google.com.hk."

A client who stopped by to find out the status of his Google advertising account told reporters outside that Google staff he had spoken with seemed confused.

"Nobody in there could give me a clear answer," said Pan Yun, manager of a Beijing real estate Web site. "I just want to know if our business can continue but they couldn't give me an answer."

Meanwhile, a Chinese Internet company run by Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-shing (李嘉誠) said it has ended its affiliation with Google.

TOM Online said it was stopping use of Google's search services after "the expiry of agreement."

"TOM reiterated that as a Chinese company, we adhere to rules and regulations in China where we operate our businesses," said Hong Kong-based parent TOM Group.

Source: [Taipei Times 2010/03/24](#)