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Microsoft shuts down Chinese blogger

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BEIJING — Microsoft Corp. has shut down the Internet journal of a Chinese blogger that discussed politically sensitive issues, including a recent strike at a Beijing newspaper.

The action came amid criticism by free-speech activists of foreign technology companies that help the communist government enforce censorship or silence dissent in order to be allowed into China's market.

Microsoft's Web log-hosting service shut down the blog at the Chinese government's request, said Brooke Richardson, group product manager with Microsoft's MSN online division at company headquarters in Redmond, Wash.

Although Beijing has supported Internet use for education and business, it fiercely polices content. Filters block objectionable foreign Web sites and regulations ban subversive and pornographic content and require service providers to enforce censorship rules.

"When we operate in markets around the world, we have to ensure that our service complies with global laws as well as local laws and norms," Richardson said.

Richardson said the blog was shut down Dec. 30 or Dec. 31 for violating Microsoft's code of conduct, which states that users must be in compliance with local laws in the country in which the user is based.

Written under pen name

The blog, written under the pen name An Ti by Zhao Jing, who works for the Beijing bureau of The New York Times as a research assistant, touched on sensitive topics such as China's relations with Taiwan.

Foreign companies have adopted Chinese standards, saying they must obey local laws.

Microsoft's Web log service bars use of terms such as "democracy" and "human rights." On the China-based portal of search engine Google, a search for material the Dalai Lama, Taiwan and other sensitive topics returns a message saying "site cannot be found."

David Wolf, a Beijing-based technology consultant, said that while Microsoft might be hurt abroad by controversy over its actions in China, Chinese Internet services routinely exercise similar censorship.

"They simply do it as a matter of course," said Wolf, managing director of Wolf Group Asia. "When you're looking around China, there is nothing that Microsoft and Yahoo have to do that is any different from what Chinese companies already are doing."

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