China urges ISP patriot pledge
Correspondents in Beijing
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THE Chinese government is calling on internet service providers to sign a "self-discipline pact" designed to stop the spread of information that Beijing believes could harm national security. The country already requires internet firms to police their online content and weed out any criticism of the central government. It also tries to block sites it deems politically sensitive or otherwise unacceptable.

The new pact was initiated by the China Internet Association, a government-run industry group, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

"The basic principles of self-discipline for the internet industry are patriotism, observance of the law, fairness and trustworthiness," Xinhua said.

Firms that sign on must promise not to spread information "threatening the national security, social stability or containing superstitious or erotic content," the agency said.

Internet service providers must also make sure they do not provide links to other sites with inappropriate material, it said.

The pact calls on internet cafes to direct web users to "healthy online information", and it urges respect for intellectual property rights.

The Associated Press

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