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IN-DEPTH COVERAGE

Part of web goes dark in protest against anti-piracy bills

Javed Anwer, TNN Jan 18, 2012, 09.55PM IST

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NEW DELHI: The web is protesting today.

Led by [Wikipedia](#) and Google, thousands of websites are protesting against two proposed anti-piracy bills on Wednesday by either shutting down their services or censoring the content. While the English site of Wikipedia is showing its visitors a message against Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and Protect IP Act (PIPA), which the US senate is discussing, Google has put its logo on the home page of the US website behind a black patch.

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Protest

Wikipedia

Jimmy Wales

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In the last few weeks, debate over SOPA and [PIPA](#) has grown in the US with most technology companies opposing the bill saying that it will affect the freedom of speech on the web and stifle innovation.

But organizations like Motion Pictures Industry Association of America (MPIAA) argue that these bills are necessary to curb piracy that severely hurts content creators and lead to loss of jobs in the US. MPIAA termed the Wednesday's protest by websites "an irresponsible gimmick" and "abuse of power".

Wikipedia on Wednesday put up a message on its homepage saying, "Imagine a World Without Free Knowledge." It informed visitors: "For over a decade, we have spent millions of hours building the largest encyclopedia in human history. Right now, the US Congress is considering legislation that could fatally damage the free and open Internet. For 24 hours, to raise awareness, we are blacking out Wikipedia."

The site also asked its US visitors to call their respective senators and tell them to vote against the two proposed bills. "Not a US citizen? Sent a passionate email to your American friends asking them to call Congress," tweeted [Jimmy Wales](#), the co-founder of Wikipedia.

The web-based encyclopedia has been joined in its protest by Google and a host of other websites. Reddit, a community of thousands of news curators, is showing just a black home page, telling viewers about "the harmful impact" SOPA can have. The normal website will not return for 12 hours. [Wordpress](#), [Craiglist](#), [Boing Boing](#), [Fark](#), and [Mozilla](#) have also gone dark.

To capture the spirit of the day, a few protesters have made a song titled The Day LOLcats Died after the famous IcanHazCheezburger network, which popularized memes based on funny kittens, joined the protest. They uploaded it on [YouTube](#) where it garnered nearly one lakh views in a few hours.

XDA-Developers, a web forum for smartphone users and that has thousands of members, has shut down the website and will only return after at least 50,000 US nationals have pledged their opposition to SOPA and PIPA.

Wired and ArsTechnica, two of the world's most prominent tech news websites, have joined the protest. While Wired has blackened all its headlines and photographs, ArsTechnica has drapped the home page in black colour and anti-SOPA illustrations.

Oatmeal, the website that serves quirky and extremely popular Oatmeal cartoons, has shut down the website for 24 hours.

Thousands of smaller blogs and websites including porn websites have also joined the blackout. Ready-templates were available online so that webmasters could join the protest with ease.

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Readers' opinions (34)

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Sahir Munn (Toronto, Ontario)

19 Jan, 2012 08:49 AM

Yeah protest..Internet should be of free information and knowledge...Fight the power, mon



Arish Sahani (India)

19 Jan, 2012 01:44 AM

Any govt official and politician one takes the task he and she should be ready for all kind of criticism and They can have many ways to clear the facts and they should use them wisely.

gman (USA)

19 Jan, 2012 01:39 AM

SOPA and PIPA are needed. Be creative, but don't blatantly copy the contents that someone created to make money. I support this. Make money genuinely.

Raju (Boston / Mumbai)

19 Jan, 2012 01:27 AM

Good news. An Arab Spring will finally happen in India against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Vadra and t

Fred (Florida)

19 Jan, 2012 01:22 AM

SOPA and PIPA are really the stupidest way to curb online piracy... Oh my site has a link to a photo of some Copy big corporations can already do now), with SOPA and PIPA, they get the right to 'blacklist' my site.... Oh and it does some violation.... This will be terrible for sites like Youtube and Facebook... And the irony is that this will do NOTH promotion sites, but they don't give you the authority to place IP bans.. In short, instead of gng to thepiratebay, I'll stuff... See how ridiculous this bill sounds now? This is what happens when Congress Men who don't even know industry is gonna support it since the more control they have, the more they can milk money from us users... STC UR CHILDREN IN THE FUTURE THAT WE COULD SHARE STUFF ONCE ON THE INTERNET!!!!



Mohan Thakur (Mumbai) replies to Raju

19 Jan, 2012 01:49 AM

How soon do you expect an Arab Spring against the exploiters.?
