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Internet Restriction Bill Passes First Reading

By The Moscow Times

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The State Duma approved in a first reading on Friday legislation that would force Internet companies to remove or block materials deemed harmful by the government.

Supporters say it will shield children from narcotics and suicide propaganda and child pornography. Under the bill, the federal government would set up a registry of blacklisted websites and then require websites, website-hosting companies and Internet service providers to help ban content.

The bill has sponsors from all four parties in the Duma, including United Russia, which holds the majority of seats.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's Cabinet has signaled unease with the proposed law. Communications and Press Minister Nikolai Nikiforov sent out a Twitter message on Friday in Russian: "The bill's idea related to protecting children from objectionable information is

right, but there are problems with the mechanisms for doing so. It needs to be improved."

Also, the Cabinet's position paper — which is already prepared and signed by Medvedev's chief of staff, Deputy Prime Minister Vladislav Surkov — suggests jettisoning parts of the bill on how to filter and blacklist harmful sites, Vedomosti reported on Friday.

Both the second and third Duma readings are expected on July 11.

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