

Prying parents: Phone monitoring apps flourish in South Korea

By Youkyung Lee
AP Technology Writer

SEOUL, South Korea — Lee Chang-june can be miles from his 12-year-old son but still know when he plays a smartphone game. With the press of an app he can see his son's phone activity, disable apps, or totally shut down the smartphone.

The app, Smart Sheriff, was funded by the South Korean government primarily to block access to pornography and other offensive content online, but its features go well beyond that.

Smart Sheriff and at least 14 other apps allow parents to monitor how long their kids use their smartphones, how many times they use apps, and which websites they visit. Some send a child's location data to parents and issue an alert when a child searches keywords such as "suicide," "pregnancy," and "bully" or receives messages with those words.

In South Korea, the apps have been downloaded at least 480,000 times.

And the number will likely go up. In April, South Korea's Korea Communications Commission, which has sweeping powers covering the telecommunications industry, required telecom companies and parents to ensure Smart Sheriff or one of the other monitoring apps is installed when anyone 18 years old or younger receives a new smartphone. The measure doesn't apply to old



EMBARRASSMENT BACKLASH. An army representative dozes off at a parliament session in Naypyitaw, Myanmar. Journalists negotiated with Myanmar officials last week to restore their access to the parliament chamber after being pushed out because pictures of snoozing lawmakers were published online. Reporters in the capital were told they would have to watch the proceedings on television from the corridor. The pictures of sleeping MPs were the main reason cited by Kyaw Soe, director general of the Union Parliament, which handles administrative duties. (AP Photo/Khin Maung Win)

Myanmar restricts journalists after photos show sleeping MPs

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Journalists negotiated with Myanmar officials last week to restore their access to the parliament chamber after being pushed out because pictures of snoozing lawmakers were published online.

Reporters in the capital, Naypyitaw, were told they would have to watch the proceedings on television from the corridor. The pictures of sleeping MPs were the main reason cited by Kyaw Soe, director general of the Union Parliament, which handles administrative duties.

Other embarrassing pictures have circulated showing lawmakers using iPad devices while in session. Another appeared to show an army representative leaning over to press a voting button for a missing lawmaker.

In a minor victory, the journalists were told they could occupy the upper floor of the chamber. While the new location was sufficient for text reporters, it gave visual journalists only a distant, back view of the MPs. Officials offered to provide handout images instead, but independent media considered that unacceptable.

"The restriction is totally unacceptable. Press freedom is not guaranteed in the country, but only in the hands of those in power. They can revoke press freedom any time they like," said Zaw Thet Htway, a former political prisoner and editor in chief of *Tomorrow* weekly journal.

Myanmar started moving from a half-century of military rule to democracy in 2011 and many of its political reforms, such as media freedom, have stalled. About 10 journalists have been jailed and nearly a dozen are facing trials.

The constitution also allots a quarter of the seats in parliament to the military, a number that gives it veto power over constitutional amendments.



MONITORING MINORS. Cho Jaehyun, a South Korean senior year high school student, speaks during an interview in Seoul, South Korea. Cho received his smartphone at age 10. His parents had control of his phone for a few months through an app when he was young, but being monitored didn't teach him to use his smartphone wisely, he says. (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man)

is appealing the regulator's ordinance to South Korea's Constitutional Court. "We are going to raise people who are accustomed to surveillance."

South Korea, one of Asia's richest nations, is crisscrossed by cheap, fast internet and smartphone use is ubiquitous. Many Koreans get their first smartphone when they are young. Eight out of 10 South Koreans 18 years old and younger own a smartphone, according to government data. Some 72 percent of elementary school students owned a smartphone in 2013, a jump from 20 percent in 2011.

How technology is affecting the young has become a national obsession. The government and parent groups have pushed numerous initiatives to limit device and internet use as well as prevent excessive gaming. Many parents welcome the ability to peer inside their children's online world.

Lee, who worked in the online game industry for nearly a decade, said that having control over his son's smartphone has been positive and increased dialogue in the family. His son plays a mobile game for about two hours on weekends. If he wants to play a mobile game outside those hours, he comes up to dad and talks about why.

"What is important is that parents and children talk to

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BIG TOBACCO NO LONGER MARKETS ON TELEVISION

THEY'VE MOVED TO THE CANDY AISLE

This photo was taken in Roseburg, Oregon. It's not unique. In fact, more than 1 in 3 retailers that sell tobacco have tobacco products and advertising at a child's eye level or next to items kids find appealing, like candy and toys. And when you think about how many convenience stores are in Oregon, that's a lot of opportunity to expose our kids to tobacco.

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