China: Censors Bar Mythical Creature

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China’s grass-mud horse, the mythical and popular Internet creature whose Chinese name sounds very much like an obscenity, is being put out to pasture by censors, the Web site Global Voices reported on Wednesday. A Chinese contributor to the site quoted a message from an Internet administrator to managers of online bulletin boards warning that “any content related with Grass-Mud Horse should not be promoted and hyped” because “the issue has been elevated to a political level.” It went on to say, “The overseas media has exaggerated the incident as a confrontation between netizens and the government.”

The grass-mud horse first appeared on Chinese Web sites in January in the wake of a crackdown by the government on politically oriented Web sites. The mythical creature’s battles with the “river crab,” which in Chinese sounds like slang for “censorship,” have been popularized in YouTube videos and on Chinese chat sites. The order also said the grass-mud horse should not be associated with river crabs and other mythical creatures, many of whose Chinese names sound obscene.

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