

GOVERNANCE

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Nepal's Social Media Block: Regulating Platforms or Restricting Democratic Freedom?

On 4 September 2025, the Government of Nepal enforced a sweeping block on 26 social media platforms, including Facebook and X, after the companies failed to meet its registration requirements. Earlier, on 27 August 2025, the government had issued a seven-day ultimatum for compliance. The cabinet based its decision on the Social Media Directives 2023 and [Supreme Court's decision](#), which require platforms to formally register before operating in Nepal and appoint a local point of contact, a Resident Grievance Handling Officer, and a Compliance Officer. The Social Media Bill 2025 has also remained pending in the Parliament amid concerns over potential restrictions on freedom of expression.

While the authorities justify the decision as a matter of sovereignty and regulation, insisting that social media companies register locally to ensure accountability, taxation, and oversight, the experts warn that such measures risk undermining democratic freedoms, limiting access to information, and cutting citizens off from vital communication tools.

The block certainly has far-reaching [implications](#). Social media has become integral to daily life in Nepal, especially for millions of households with members working abroad. For these families, platforms are the primary and most affordable means of communication across borders. Meanwhile, State institutions, from ministries to local governments, also rely heavily on social media to disseminate policies, programs, and urgent updates such as vaccination drives or disaster alerts. Restricting access therefore risks isolating citizens and weakening the ability of public institutions to reach people with timely, essential information.

The financial costs are equally pressing. Nepal's nine-month TikTok ban reportedly cost telecom providers - Ncell and Nepal telecom - nearly NRP [3 billion](#) in lost revenue. For small businesses, entrepreneurs, and content creators who depend on social platforms for visibility, marketing, and income, the damage is harder to quantify but likely amounts to millions. In a country where digital entrepreneurship is just starting to take root, such disruptions risk stalling innovation, slowing the growth of the digital economy, and pushing young talent away from emerging opportunities.

Moreover, the move also raises concerns about governance and process. By leaning on outdated directives to impose sweeping controls while a dedicated social media regulation bill remains pending in Parliament, the government risks blurring the line between legitimate regulation and censorship. Experts caution that bypassing legislative debate in favor of executive action could erode trust in institutions, shrink civic space, and weaken accountability. In practice, the ban risks cutting Nepali citizens off from platforms that provide not only communication but also spaces for civic dialogue and political participation.

The debate over platform governance is not unique to Nepal, as governments worldwide grapple with regulating digital spaces without compromising openness. For Nepal, however, a more constructive path would be to strengthen diplomatic engagement with the companies and create consensus-based provisions that allow both sides to find common ground. Demanding too much from platforms without acknowledging their limitations and the benefits they offer would undermine a balanced and effective approach.

POLICY WATCH

National Youth Policy 2082 (2025)

The National Youth Policy 2025 has been endorsed with several amendments to strengthen socio-economic empowerment of Nepal youths. The age bracket of youth has been reduced to 18 to 35. The federal Ministry of Youth has been designated as the lead agency, while giving authority to provincial governments to tailor provincial policies and programs, and delegating local governments to identify and mobilize local youth talent. The National Youth Council, meanwhile, has been tasked to coordinate youth-related initiatives with CSOs and the private sector. The review of this policy has been mandated every five years.

The policy identifies nine key focus areas: education, health, employment and skill development, sports and culture, environmental protection and climate justice, digital technology and cybersecurity, social inclusion, governance and leadership, and partnerships and collaboration. Under these areas, 70 detailed plans have been outlined, including scholarships, vocational training, affordable youth-friendly health services with attention to mental and reproductive health, and programs to grow employment and entrepreneurial opportunities through startups, incubation, and low-interest loans.

Moreover, a national network of youth climate volunteers, provincial startup incubation centers, universal digital literacy, and at least 50% youth presence in decision-making bodies are a few of the measurable goals established to achieve by 2030. [Read More](#)

Governance Issues of the Week

- 1. Increase in women migrating abroad for labor migration:** The number of Nepali women migrating abroad for labor migration is steadily rising. Data from the Department of Foreign Employment shows an increase from 80,172 in FY 2023/24 to 94,455 in FY 2024/25. In the last five years, women's share in labor migration has grown by 8 percent, reaching 11.25 percent. These figures, however, cover only those with labor permits. Many women, restricted by a government ban, still choose illegal routes through India and Bangladesh to reach Gulf countries and Malaysia. [Read More](#)
- 2. Nepal to track foreign nationals entering the country:** Nepal has introduced a mandatory registration and movement-tracking system for all foreign nationals entering the country. Beginning September 17, the first phase will be implemented at five-star hotels in Kathmandu through the "NepaliPort Traveller/Foreign National Tracking Module." The digital platform is designed to enhance immigration monitoring, tourism data, and communication with service providers. The rule applies to all foreigners, including Indians entering via land routes, with institutions serving them required to enroll. [Read More](#)
- 3. Federal Civil Service Bill passes the National Assembly:** The National Assembly has unanimously passed the Federal Civil Service Bill with major amendments, sending it back to the House of Representatives. Key changes include reinstating the debated cooling-off period, scrapping the Additional Secretary post, and restoring a 10 percent quota for open competition in Joint Secretary and Section Non-Gazetted (Third Class) positions. The Assembly also upheld raising the retirement age from 58 to 60 in phases. [Read More](#)
- 4. Judicial services see 72% female appointees:** The proportion of women in the Public Service Commissions' judicial services has increased, as out of 44 total seats in the general category 38 have been filled by women, while only six are by men. The top six examinees are also women. The reserved category sees 13 women from the women quota, 3 from the indigenous quota, 3 from the Madhesi quota, and 1 candidate from the Dalit quota; making 72%, i.e., 59 out of 81 total examinees to be women. [Read More](#)
- 5. Constitutional Council Bill stuck for 1.5 months:** The Constitutional Council Bill, passed by both houses of the parliament, has remained stalled for over six weeks after the President returned it for reconsideration citing five concerns. It includes the bill being inconsistent with Article 284 of the constitution and provision allowing decisions to be taken only with the chair and 50% of the members. The parliament secretariat had scheduled the bill for discussion on September 4, but was later withdrawn at the request of the ruling coalition. [Read More](#)

Nepal Governance Weekly is an analytical update of Nepal's current affairs based on media and real sources mining, to sensitize the communities on hot news on various Political economic governance and policy issues from the perspective of accountability.

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