

GOVERNANCE

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TikTok Ban Sparks Debate on Freedom of Expression and Economy

WEEKLY

Photo by The Kathmandu Post

In a move that has stirred controversy, the freedom fighter government in Nepal has imposed a ban on the popular social media platform TikTok, citing concerns about "social harmony" and its perceived negative impact on society.

The decision has triggered a widespread debate as millions of Nepalese relied on TikTok for entertainment, while small businesses flourished through the platform, and the content creator market reached its zenith. According to a BBC Media Action report on media usage in Nepal, TikTok stands as the third most-used platform nationally, playing a significant role in information, entertainment, and digital marketing. The ban, enacted without a thorough impact assessment, is raising concerns about its potential adverse effects on small businesses.

However, more than 1,600 TikTok-related cybercrime cases have been registered over the last four years in Nepal. Despite its popularity, TikTok has continued to face scrutiny globally. Authorities have expressed concerns about data security and the possibility of information being passed to the Chinese government, although ByteDance, TikTok's parent company, has rejected these allegations. Several countries, including India, have previously banned TikTok.

In response to the ban, TikTok conveyed its concerns to the National Telecommunications Authority (NTA) through email. The company highlighted its commitment to user safety, detailed global efforts to maintain a safe platform, and emphasized its registration as a digital service taxpayer in Nepal. TikTok representatives acknowledged the government's worries and expressed a willingness to address issues through discussions. The economic impact of the TikTok ban in Nepal is also under scrutiny. TikTok claims to have registered as a taxpayer, arguing that the ban will disrupt its investment plans and negatively affect Nepali content creators and businesses relying on TikTok for marketing.

The TikTok ban in Nepal underscores the broader tension between regulating online content and safeguarding freedom of expression. While the government asserts its commitment to social harmony, critics argue for a more nuanced and constitutionally aligned approach.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

Governance Issues of the Week

1. After a four-year closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Korala border point in Mustang has reopened. Excitement abounds among Upper Mustang residents as commercial activities resume, facilitating the export of products like pashmina and Yarsagumba to China. Initial permits have been issued, with plans to extend access to all Mustang residents soon.

Read more: [The Rising Nepal](#)

2. Approximately Rs 330 million allocated for cold storage construction in Lumbini province has allegedly been misappropriated. The Smart Krishi program, launched in 2019-20 to boost agriculture, allocated funds for 23 cold storage facilities. However, mismanagement, inadequate feasibility studies, and financial hurdles have left several unused or facing closure, jeopardizing the initiative's objectives.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

3. The government plans to use funds from the Parliament Development Fund to aid families affected by the recent earthquake in Jajarkot. Each affected family will receive Rs. 50,000 in two installments for temporary housing. Following a Supreme Court order, budgeted funds for parliamentary schemes related to earthquake rehabilitation will be transferred to the disaster management fund. The Ministry of Urban Development will offer technical support, and provincial governments will oversee monitoring.

Read more: [EKantipur](#)

4. Nepal has experienced a significant rise in foreign investment commitments, reaching NPR 21.88 billion in the initial four months of the current fiscal year (FY 080/081). This reflects an 89% increase from the same period in the preceding fiscal year. Industry Department data indicates that 99% of 270 small, 5 medium, 3 large, and 21 other industries have secured investment commitments, generating job opportunities for 8,770 individuals.

5. Read more: [Naya Patrika](#)

Remittances contribute around 67% to Nepal's foreign exchange reserves. Over the last five years, remittances have grown at an average rate exceeding 60%. Recent data indicates a surge, surpassing NPR 16 billion, reflecting a 6.7% growth in the last three months. This reliance on remittances highlights their crucial role in Nepal's economy, urging the need for diversification and reduced dependency on this single source.

6. Read more: [EKantipur](#)

The Nepali government has decided to set up an embassy in Portugal. Currently, Nepal's ambassador to France is accredited to Portugal, while the Portuguese Embassy in New Delhi covers Nepal. With over 20,000 Nepalis residing in Portugal, the move reflects an effort to strengthen diplomatic ties established between the two nations on September 1, 1976. The decision awaits final approval.

Read more: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

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Our return e-mailing address is:
nepal@accountabilitylab.org