

Content Blocking Regime: NITI Aayog's Deregulation Push for India's Digital Economy

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CONTENT BLOCKING REGIME



Content Blocking Regime Latest News

- **NITI Aayog** has sought feedback from major tech companies and start-ups on whether India's current online content blocking requirements and transparency timelines are "feasible."
- This is part of a broader deregulation push targeting India's tech laws framework, which falls under the IT Ministry's domain.

What Has NITI Aayog Asked?

- The Aayog has sought industry views on how existing legislation can be simplified. The consultation covers a wide sweep of regulatory issues:
 - Laws affecting social media companies and other online intermediaries
 - Cybersecurity
 - Data protection

- Online gaming
- In a meeting, where executives of technology industry participated, specific questions were shared with stakeholders, including:
 - Are current takedown, grievance, and transparency timelines operationally feasible across different categories and sizes of intermediaries?
 - Which intermediary due diligence obligations impose the highest recurring compliance burden, and what specific operational simplifications would be most impactful?
- NITI Aayog will review industry responses and send a detailed note to the IT Ministry with its recommendations. However, the IT Ministry retains discretion and may or may not accept the Aayog's suggestions.

The 'Jan Vishwas Siddhant' Initiative

- This consultation is part of NITI Aayog's **Jan Vishwas Siddhant initiative**, an effort to build a trust-based regulatory environment by gathering inputs across sectors on deregulation and rationalisation of existing laws.
- Experts described the effort as an attempt to clear the system's "regulatory cholesterol."

India's Tightening Content Blocking Regime

- The consultation comes at a time when India has significantly expanded its content blocking activity – content blocking orders rose from **over 12,000** in **2024** to **over 24,000** in **2025**.

Shortened takedown timelines

- In February, the IT Ministry notified amendments to the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**.
- Social media platforms must now remove flagged content within **two-three hours**, down from the earlier 24–36-hour window.
- Industry executives have called this the shortest takedown window mandated by any government globally.
- Meta, which operates Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, has called the norms "challenging" to comply with operationally.

Related Development: Expanding Powers to Issue Blocking Orders

- Separately, the Centre has been exploring whether to extend content-blocking powers under **Section 69(A) of the IT Act, 2000** (currently exercised only by the IT Ministry) to the Ministries of Home Affairs, External Affairs, Defence, and Information and Broadcasting.
- This proposal is understood to be currently stalled.

India's Expanding Digital Footprint

- India's rapid digitalisation has transformed how citizens interact with the State, access services, and participate in governance.

- Digital platforms now operate at population scale, making data a critical public resource.
- This has made embedding privacy and security into digital systems a central governance priority.

Scale of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- India's DPI forms the backbone of its digital transformation. Key initiatives include:
 - Aadhaar: A trusted digital identity framework.
 - UPI: Revolutionised real-time digital payments.
 - MyGov: A citizen-participation platform with over 6 crore users.
 - eSanjeevani: Facilitated more than 44 crore digital health consultations, expanding healthcare access.
- These platforms demonstrate the scale and inclusiveness of India's DPI while underscoring the need for strong data protection to sustain public trust.

Connectivity and Digital Inclusion at Scale

- India's digital reach is backed by strong connectivity indicators:
 - India is the **world's third-largest digitalised economy**.
 - Over **101.7 crore broadband subscribers** (as of September 2025), each spending an average of **1,000 minutes online**.
 - Mobile data is highly affordable, at **\$0.10 per GB (2025)**.
- This affordable, widespread connectivity has made digital platforms central to identity verification, payments, healthcare, education, grievance redressal, and citizen participation.

Conclusion

- NITI Aayog's outreach signals a recalibration of India's tech regulation, weighing tighter content control against ease of compliance for platforms.
- Whether this results in eased timelines or reaffirms the current strict regime will depend on how the IT Ministry balances industry concerns with its broader push for a stronger digital enforcement architecture.

Source: IE | PIB

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