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A Social Media Ban Will Not Save Our Children

Context

- The suicide of three sisters in Ghaziabad provoked **national grief** and immediate calls for strict action against digital platforms.
- Public anger often seeks a clear cause and a decisive response, and social media became the primary target.
- Yet complex social problems rarely yield to simple remedies. While online environments can intensify psychological distress among adolescents, a blanket prohibition risks replacing thoughtful policy with reaction.
- The challenge lies in protecting children without undermining their **rights, autonomy**, and participation in modern life.
- Effective solutions must therefore balance safety with access, focusing on responsible governance rather than elimination.

Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health

- Research consistently associates heavy social media use with **anxiety, depression, self-harm**, and **body image** dissatisfaction, particularly among teenage girls.
- Online comparison, cyberbullying, and constant performance pressure can aggravate emotional vulnerability.
- These findings warrant concern but require careful interpretation. Digital exposure rarely operates as a single cause; instead, it interacts with loneliness, academic stress, or family conflict.
- Overstating its influence risks ignoring broader psychological and social contexts. The issue is therefore not whether harm exists, but how society should address it without restricting opportunity.

Global Responses and the Rise of Moral Panic

• International Policy Trends

- Governments across the world have pursued strict regulation.
- Australia has barred users under sixteen from major platforms through mandatory age verification, while Spain has proposed similar measures and legal liability for harmful algorithms.
- These policies promise swift protection and visible accountability.

• The Concept of Moral Panic

- Such reactions reflect a **moral panic**, where a complex problem is attributed to a single identifiable threat.
- A technological villain offers emotional clarity and political reassurance. However, symbolic crackdowns seldom resolve underlying causes.
- Emotional satisfaction can overshadow careful analysis, resulting in policies that appear decisive yet produce limited real-world benefit.

Why a Social Media Ban Would Fail in India

• Technical Ineffectiveness

- Restrictions are easily bypassed. Adolescents often possess higher **digital literacy** than regulators and can access platforms through **VPNs** or alternative applications.
- Prohibitions may push users into **unregulated** or encrypted spaces, increasing exposure to **grooming, extremism**, and exploitation.
- Mandatory **surveillance** through identity verification also raises privacy risks.

• Ignoring the Social Value of Digital Platforms

- For many teenagers, especially those in marginalised settings, online spaces offer **community**, belonging, and support.
- Rural youth, socially isolated adolescents, and **LGBTQ** individuals rely on digital networks to express identity and seek advice.
- Removing access may deepen isolation rather than improve well-being.

- **Democratic Deficit in Policymaking**

- Policies affecting young people often exclude their voices. Adolescents are treated as passive subjects instead of participants.
- A meaningful **democracy** requires consultation, listening, and recognition of lived experiences.
- Regulation designed without youth engagement risks misunderstanding both problems and solutions.

- **Reinforcing Gender Inequality**

- A prohibition would likely intensify **gender** Internet access in India already favours boys over girls.
- Within conservative households, restrictions would lead families to confiscate devices primarily from daughters, limiting education, skills, and **mobility**.
- A protective measure could therefore entrench inequality rather than reduce harm.

A Better Policy Approach

- **Regulating Technology Companies**

- Attention must shift from controlling children to governing corporations. Platform **algorithms** are designed to maximise engagement and profit.
- Governments should impose enforceable **duty of care** obligations, establish **competition law**, and require **accountability** for harmful design practices.
- An independent **regulator** with technical expertise would be better suited than general administrative authorities.

- **Promoting Research and Youth Participation**

- Comprehensive **research** is needed to understand how online behaviour varies across class, caste, and region.
- Long-term studies should inform **policy** rather than speculation. Young people must participate directly in consultation processes, shaping interventions that affect their daily lives.

The Way Forward

- **Expanding the Debate: Artificial Intelligence and Child Safety**

- Concerns about harm extend beyond social media. Increasing reliance on **AI** chatbots for advice and emotional support introduces new risks.
- Excessive dependence may create **cognitive** weakness in critical thinking and expose minors to inappropriate interactions.
- Consistent standards are required across all digital technologies, not selective regulation.

• Toward a Healthy Media Ecology

- Technology is neither inherently beneficial nor inherently harmful. Its effects depend on structure, incentives, and guidance.
- A balanced **media ecology** requires education, supervision, and responsible design.
- Rather than absolute acceptance or rejection, society must cultivate informed use and ethical innovation.

Conclusion

- Public grief after the Ghaziabad tragedy generated urgent demands for bans, but prohibition offers only the illusion of control.
- It would be technically ineffective, socially damaging, democratically weak, and potentially discriminatory.
- Meaningful protection lies in regulating corporations, strengthening research, and involving young citizens in governance.
- By prioritising thoughtful **regulation** over reaction, society can protect mental health while preserving opportunity, ensuring both safety and dignity for the next generation.

A Social Media Ban Will Not Save Our Children FAQs

Q1. What triggered the public debate on social media regulation?

Ans. The suicide of three sisters in Ghaziabad sparked national concern and calls for stricter control of social media platforms.

Q2. Does research show social media directly causes mental illness in teenagers?

Ans. Research shows social media is associated with mental health problems, but it usually intensifies existing vulnerabilities rather than acting as a single cause.

Q3. Why might banning social media be ineffective?

Ans. A ban may fail because adolescents can bypass restrictions using alternative platforms or VPNs and may move to more dangerous unregulated spaces.

Q4. How could a ban affect girls in India differently from boys?

Ans. In many households, girls are more likely to lose device access, which would reduce their educational opportunities and social mobility.

Q5. What solution is suggested instead of banning social media?

Ans. The recommended solution is stronger regulation of technology companies, independent oversight, and policies informed by research and youth participation.

Source: **The Hindu**

Myanmar's Military-Scripted Polls, India's Strategic Bind

Context

- Five years after the February 2021 **coup**, Myanmar's military organised elections between December 2025 and January 2026 to project political normalcy.
- The military-backed **USDP** emerged victorious in a tightly managed political environment marked by restricted participation, suppression of opposition, and ongoing armed conflict.
- Rather than restoring civilian rule, the process sought to institutionalise military authority.
- The elections hold wider regional importance, particularly for **India**, which shares borders, security concerns, and economic ambitions tied to Myanmar.

Manufactured Legitimacy and Controlled Participation

- The electoral exercise functioned primarily as a mechanism to produce **legitimacy**. Voting occurred in only 265 of 330 **townships**, excluding large populations.
- Polling remained concentrated in urban **wards**, while rural areas under **resistance** influence were effectively absent from the process.
- Political competition was systematically eliminated. The **Election Commission** dissolved major parties including the **NLD**, the Arakan National Party, and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, while senior leaders were imprisoned.
- At the same time, numerous serving and retired military officers contested under the USDP banner.
- Turnout figures reinforced the credibility crisis. The regime reported roughly 55% participation, a sharp fall from earlier elections.
- Under conditions of fear and surveillance, reduced participation signified silent political **rejection** rather than apathy.
- The elections thus represented controlled participation rather than democratic choice.

Elections Amid Civil War

- The polls took place amid widespread **conflict**. Since 2021, thousands of civilians, activists, and journalists have been killed, tens of thousands arrested, and more than 113,000 structures destroyed, especially in Sagaing and Magway.
- Repression strengthened armed opposition. The **People's Defence Forces**, working alongside long-standing **ethnic** armed organisations, now control significant territory, including dozens of towns.
- The state therefore lacks full **sovereignty** over its territory.
- Under such conditions, elections cannot stabilise governance. Instead, they deepen political division: participation would validate military rule, while opposition groups view armed struggle as the only viable option.
- The electoral process therefore risks intensifying violence rather than resolving it.

India's Diplomatic Balancing Act

- For India, Myanmar is a strategic neighbour and a gateway central to the **Act East Policy**.
- Official statements support **democracy** and call for free and inclusive elections while avoiding direct recognition of the junta's authority.
- High-level engagement continues. Diplomatic contacts, including leadership meetings, demonstrate ongoing **engagement** while carefully avoiding endorsement.
- India simultaneously maintains distance by clarifying non-official involvement during the election period.
- Humanitarian outreach strengthens this calibrated approach. Relief operations and medical assistance following the 2025 earthquake allowed India to maintain a constructive role without conferring political approval.
- The strategy effectively amounts to engagement without full diplomatic validation.

Security and Economic Implications for India

• Refugee Flows

- Violence has driven significant **refugees** into India, particularly into Mizoram and Manipur.
- The absence of a national refugee policy places heavy administrative burdens on state governments and exposes governance gaps.
- Continued instability is likely to sustain these movements.

• Infrastructure and Connectivity

- Major connectivity initiatives, the **Kaladan** Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and the **Trilateral Highway**, have experienced repeated delays due to insecurity.
- Claims of post-election normalisation are unlikely to improve ground conditions, forcing reassessment of timelines and investment risks.

• Non-Traditional Security Threats

- State fragility has accelerated **trafficking**, narcotics trade, and organised crime.
- A major concern is the growth of cyber-scam centres and **cyber** slavery networks operating in conflict zones.
- Thousands of Indians have already been rescued, yet many remain trapped. These emerging threats demand coordinated domestic and regional responses.

The Limits of International Pressure

- Western governments and **ASEAN** have declined to recognise the election results. However, external pressure alone cannot resolve Myanmar's political crisis.
- The military remains entrenched, while opposition forces remain fragmented.
- India therefore pursues a dual policy: maintaining communication with the authorities while also sustaining contact with local stakeholders.

- This approach acknowledges uncertainty regarding Myanmar's future political order and prioritises stability along the frontier.

Conclusion

- Myanmar's 2025–26 elections did not signal **democratic restoration** but an effort to formalise military rule under institutional cover.
- Conducted under repression and territorial fragmentation, the process failed to address the underlying political crisis and may prolong instability.
- For India, the situation presents a lasting dilemma; **disengagement risks border instability** and economic disruption, while recognition would compromise democratic commitments.
- New Delhi therefore follows a careful middle path, **balancing ideals with national interest**.

Myanmar's Military-Scripted Polls, India's Strategic Bind FAQs

Q1. What was the main purpose of Myanmar's 2025–26 elections?

Ans. The elections were organised to project political normalcy and institutionalise military authority rather than restore genuine democratic governance.

Q2. Why were the elections considered lacking in credibility?

Ans. They lacked credibility because major opposition parties were dissolved, many leaders were imprisoned, and voting was restricted to selected areas.

Q3. How did the elections affect the internal conflict in Myanmar?

Ans. Instead of reducing violence, the elections deepened divisions and are likely to intensify the ongoing armed conflict.

Q4. Why is Myanmar strategically important for India?

Ans. Myanmar is important because it connects India to Southeast Asia, shares a long border with northeastern states, and is central to India's Act East Policy.

Q5. What approach has India adopted toward the Myanmar regime?

Ans. India has followed a balanced policy by maintaining engagement with the authorities while still supporting democratic principles.

Source: **The Hindu**

India's Textile Sector - Reimagining from Volume to Value

Context

- The Union Budget 2026–27 positioned the textile sector as a **strategic driver** of economic growth, employment generation, export expansion, and rural livelihood support.
- The Budget marks a shift from fragmented, scheme-based support to an **integrated** value-chain approach, covering fibre to fashion.

- However, the core question remains – Will India merely expand textile production, or will it capture the higher value embedded in design, branding, and global fashion markets?

Key Budget Announcements for the Textile Sector

- **Integrated value-chain approach**

- The Budget outlines five major programmes –
 - **National Fibre Scheme:** Ensuring sustainable raw material supply, and strengthening upstream fibre production.
 - **Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme:** Focusing on scaling manufacturing capacity, and employment-intensive growth model.
 - **National Handloom and Handicraft Programme (Consolidated):** Rationalising multiple schemes, and strengthening artisan ecosystems.
 - **Text-ECON Initiative:** Enhancing global competitiveness, and supporting modernisation and exports.
 - **Samarth 2.0 (Skill Development Upgrade):** Focus on workforce modernisation, industry-oriented skilling.
- **Significance:** These schemes together signal a shift towards a holistic blueprint, linking fibre production, manufacturing, artisan livelihoods, skills, and exports.

- **Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative**

- It is designed to strengthen khadi, handloom, and handicraft sectors through improved market access, branding, and training.
- This reflects a welcome recognition that India's textile strength lies not only in mechanised mills, but also in its vast **cultural and craft** ecosystems — systems that sustain millions of rural livelihoods.
- This will strengthen rural non-farm employment, aligning with **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and inclusive growth.

- **Mega Textile Parks in “Challenge Mode”**

- **Expansion of infrastructure:** Similar to PM MITRA Parks, consolidating manufacturing, logistics, value addition, with special focus on technical textiles.
- **Significance:** It will reduce logistics costs, encourage economies of scale, attract private investment (reflected in positive equity market response).

Strategic Shift in Textile Policy

- **Earlier approach:** Isolated schemes targeting individual bottlenecks, and fragmented policy architecture.
- **Budget 2026 approach:**
 - Integrated, value-chain-based policy
 - Treating textiles as a strategic industrial ecosystem

- Connecting economic, social, and cultural dimensions
- Reflecting a maturing policy imagination

Key Challenges and Gaps Identified

• The value creation deficit

- Though India exports fabric, garments, and embellishments, it remains a low-margin, cost-competitive supplier, weak in brand ownership and creative authorship.
- **Missing elements:** Design education, trend intelligence systems, sustainability certification, and brand-oriented export strategy.
- Without these, India risks being a volume producer, not a value-setter in global fashion.

• Narrow framing of skills

- While Samarth 2.0 modernises workforce skills, it focuses mainly on operational training.
- **Missing elements:** Creative capabilities, design leadership, managerial competence, systems-level thinking, and digital and sustainability integration.
- In a global market driven by fast fashion cycles, digital tools, ESG compliance, and consumer consciousness, skill depth matters as much as scale.

• Artisan vulnerability and pricing power

- Even with Gram Swaraj support, **structural issues** (fragmented supply chains, inconsistent quality standards, weak bargaining power, income insecurity) persist.
- Therefore, assured procurement mechanisms, transparent pricing systems, quality certification frameworks, and direct market access platforms (digital marketplaces) are needed.
- Otherwise, artisans remain vulnerable despite increased output.

• External trade pressures

- **Opportunities:** Emerging trade agreements (e.g., with the European Union), and expanded global market access.
- **Risks:** Competition from Bangladesh, Vietnam; fluctuating tariffs; stringent compliance norms; and sustainability standards.
- India must combine infrastructure, scale, brand building, and standards compliance.

Way Forward - From “Make More” to “Value Better”

- **Move towards brand ownership:** Promote Indian global fashion brands. Incentivise design-led exports. Create fashion innovation hubs.
- **Strengthen creative ecosystem:** Invest in top-tier design institutes. Encourage industry-academia collaboration. Support IP protection in fashion.

- **Secure artisan livelihoods structurally:** Introduce minimum support mechanisms. Digital platforms for direct selling. GI tagging and certification expansion. Transparent value-chain integration.
- **Focus on sustainability and compliance:** Green textiles, circular economy practices, and ESG-based export readiness.
- **Build technical textile leadership:** R&D support; high-tech manufacturing clusters; and defence, medical, and industrial textile integration.

Conclusion

- Union Budget 2026–27 marks a **turning point** in India's textile policy. It transitions from fragmented to an integrated approach, recognising textiles as central to India's economic and social fabric.
- Yet scale alone is not destiny. So, India's textile ambition must ultimately be measured not just in export volumes, but in value captured, livelihoods secured, and cultural capital elevated.

India's Textile Sector FAQs

Q1. How the Budget 2026 marks a structural shift in India's textile policy?

Ans. It shifts textile policy from fragmented scheme-based support to an integrated value-chain approach.

Q2. Why does India's textile sector continue to remain a low-margin supplier in the global fashion economy?

Ans. This is because of India's weak design ecosystem, limited brand ownership, and inadequate focus on creative value addition.

Q3. What is the significance of the Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative in strengthening rural textile livelihoods?

Ans. The initiative recognises khadi, handloom, and handicrafts as pillars of rural non-farm employment.

Q4. Why infrastructure expansion alone cannot ensure global competitiveness in textiles?

Ans. While mega textile parks and scale improve efficiency, long-term competitiveness depends equally on brand building.

Q5. What are the limitations of India's current skilling approach in the textile sector?

Ans. The absence of emphasis on creative, managerial, and digital capabilities restricts India's transition to a value-setting textile economy.

Source: **IE**

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