

Lift ban on YouTube, demands Pakistani daily

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Islamabad: A leading Pakistani daily on Thursday demanded that the ban on YouTube in Pakistan must be lifted and wondered whether it was "one of the most ridiculous bans slapped by the state".

An editorial "YouTube: pointless ban" in the Dawn on Thursday said it has been three years since access to YouTube within Pakistan was "curtailed, following a furore in the Muslim world caused by a certain mischief-making film trailer".

"Back then, it was promised that some way of filtering content, or getting YouTube's parent company, Google, to do this, would be found," it said.

The daily added: "Since then, though, the matter has been reduced to the level of farce. Various government functionaries have promised solutions, but nothing has happened. The superior courts have used their time to puzzle over the problem, all to naught."

The National Assembly on May 6 last year unanimously adopted a resolution to lift the blockade; and on Tuesday, the Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology also directed that YouTube be unblocked.

"Will this be enough to see the ban lifted? Citizens are justifiably wondering what it will take, or at what level a consensus could be reached, to reverse one of the most ridiculous bans slapped by the state," the editorial asked.

"It is an open secret that the blockade is pointless, given that there are several methods through which the ban can and is being bypassed."

The daily went on to say that the government "needs to own up to the fact that open access to the internet, especially those sites that are used for research and educational purposes, is the citizenry's right".

"It will never be possible to entirely control the flow of online content, and the attempt to do so is futile. A much better route would be to educate the populace on surfing safely.

"It is high time that the YouTube ban was lifted, as the Senate standing committee has directed," the editorial said.

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