

Internet, social media back in Ethiopia after block

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Ethiopia shut down internet access even to diplomatic installations last week in a move the government said was necessary to keep students from being distracted during annual exams

Ethiopia re-activated cellphone data services and unexpectedly allowed access to social media sites that had been blocked since a wave of anti-government protests last year, a government spokesman told AFP on Thursday.

Africa's second most-populous country shut down internet access even to diplomatic installations last week in a move the government said was necessary to keep students from being distracted during annual exams.

Deputy communications minister Zadig Abraha confirmed the lifting of the ban but declined to say why social [media](#) sites like Facebook and Twitter, which have been blocked for months, are now freely accessible.

"This is an open country and everything is open," Zadig said.

Ethiopia had restored [broadband internet access](#) over the weekend and allowed the African Union headquarters and the UN's Economic Commission for Africa to get back online shortly after the initial shutdown last week.

Mobile phone data networks—which the majority of businesses and people rely on to get online—only returned around noon on Thursday, an AFP journalist witnessed.

Social media was also accessible, unlike before the shutdown.

Ethiopia last year restricted access to Facebook, Twitter and other sites after the country was rocked by anti-government protests that left hundreds dead and resulted in more than 11,000 arrests.

The government has blamed dissidents for inciting the protests via [social media](#) postings.

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