

# CATMOCK DAILY CAPSULE

March 31, 2026

## KAKURO

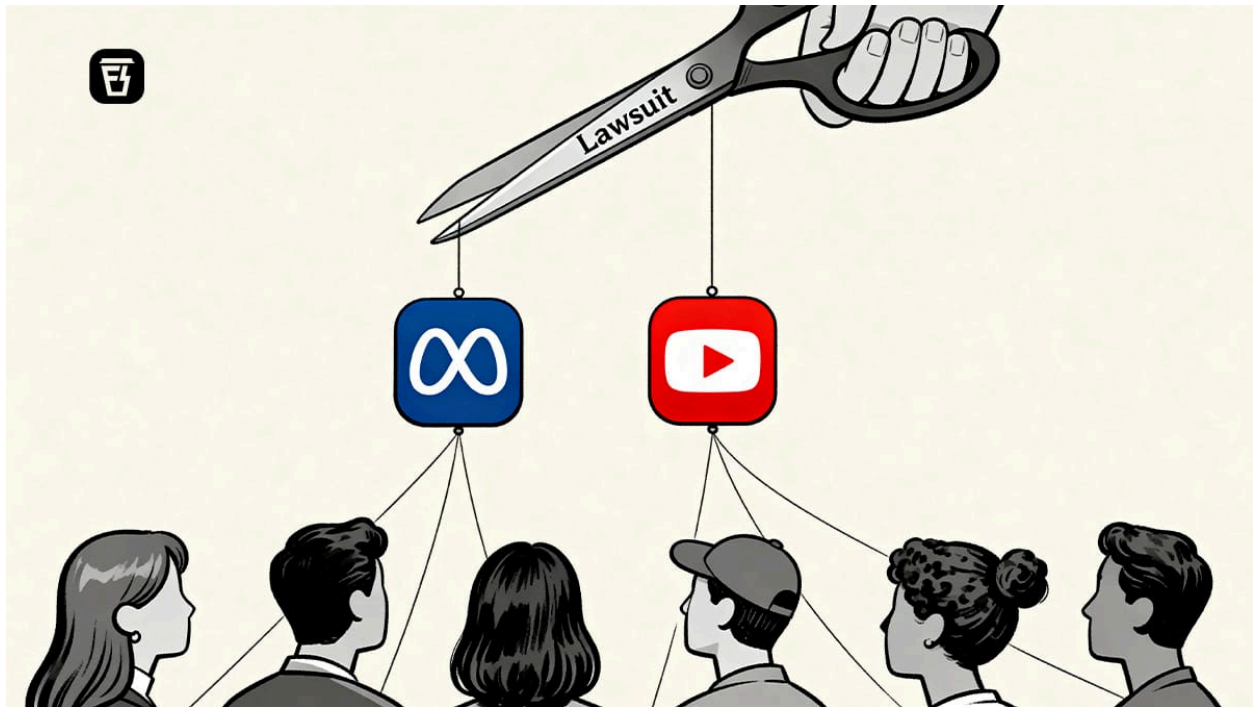
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## WHY INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE GOT SUED

- *Finshots*



More often than not, most of us find ourselves in a situation like this. You open Instagram for a few minutes. One reel turns into five. Five turn into twenty. And before you realise it, half an hour has gone by. Nothing forced you to stay. You could have left at any time.

At least, that's how it feels.

For years, social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube were seen as a neutral space. It's where everybody could join, interact and share their pictures and videos from their life, and at the same time, find out the happenings of the world and their closest friends.

And the best part is that it's completely free of cost. No subscriptions and no upfront cost. All you needed was an internet connection and a device.

But of course, nothing is truly free. Because while users like you and me weren't paying with money, we were with something else. Our time, our attention and eventually, our behaviour around the platforms themselves.

You would assume that since these platforms do not create most of the content themselves, they are neutral by design. That whatever impact they have depends entirely on what people choose to watch.

But that assumption misses something important.

Behind the scenes, these platforms were doing more than just hosting content. They were learning about us. Every scroll, pause, and like became a signal. Over time, those signals began shaping what users saw next, how long they stayed, and how often they came back.

Which raises a more uncomfortable question.

If platforms are not just showing content, but actively shaping behaviour, can they still be considered passive?

That question was at the centre of a Los Angeles courtroom battle recently.

Last week, both Meta who owns Instagram and Facebook and Google who owns YouTube were sued by a young woman who argued that these platforms were not just engaging, but deliberately addictive. She claimed that using them from a very young age led to usage patterns that in turn, led to serious mental health issues.

The companies pushed back and argued that there is no such thing as an 'addictive platform'. After all, there are billions of users who use their products on a daily basis. And there's the matter of choice. However long a user decides to stay is their personal choice and responsibility, not product design itself. So in many ways, their argument sounded intuitive.

Let's understand it with an example of your favourite restaurant. Now as good as the food is, there is a very low chance you would call it addictive. And even if you kept going back, it would be strange to expect the restaurant to tell you to stop.

But the court did not see social media the same way.

A restaurant serves you when you walk in. It does not adapt in real time or place another dish on your table the moment you finish one. Social media platforms do.

So why do we continue to scroll?

Because the platforms are doing more than showing content. They are actively guiding what you see and how long you stay.

The features like infinite scroll, autoplay and of course algorithmic recommendations weren't seen as neutral tools. Rather, it was seen as a system that removed the natural stopping points. That means there's no clear place to pause and definitely no end to reach.

Each swipe does not just show the next post or video. It offers a possibility. Maybe the next one is funnier, more interesting and more relevant.

Most of the time, it is not. But every once in a while, it is.

And that unpredictability is what keeps the loop going.

In court, experts described this as a system built on variable rewards. An unpredictable mix of content that keeps users chasing the next "hit". This kind of behaviour is not new. Casinos are designed to keep people playing. Shopping malls are designed to keep people browsing. Both use subtle cues to extend how long you stay, often without you noticing it.

But this case went beyond how these systems work. Multiple studies in the past have proved it as much. It was about the choices the companies made, despite what they knew.

Years ago, Frances Haugen, a former Facebook employee and whistleblower, had already suggested that platforms were aware of the trade-offs between engagement and user well-being. What was once an allegation has now been argued as evidence.

Which meant the question was no longer just about what these platforms did to users. It was about the decisions they made anyway.

And that difference changed everything.

It's been repeatedly talked about regulating attention and why that was difficult compared to alcohol or tobacco because attention is tied to speech and commerce, among other things.

For years, platforms like Meta and YouTube had a powerful legal shield protecting them. It is called Section 230, and it was built on a simple idea. Since these platforms do not create the content themselves, they cannot be held responsible for it. It is why Facebook was not liable for hate speech on its platform, and why YouTube was not liable for radicalisation videos.

But this case never challenged the content. It challenged the design.

And Section 230 was simply not built to answer for that. It protects platforms for what flows through them. It has no answer for how the pipe itself was built.

So the jury did something that reframed the entire debate. Instead of treating Instagram and YouTube as neutral spaces, they treated them as products. And that changes the standard entirely. A product does not have to guarantee harm to be held accountable. It only needs to make harm reasonably foreseeable, and still continue without adequate safeguards.

The jury found that threshold had been crossed. The verdict came with \$6 million in damages. But for companies the size of Meta and YouTube, that is a rounding error.

So it raises the question: why fight it at all? After all, platforms like TikTok and Snapchat had quietly settled similar cases before they ever reached a verdict.

The answer is that this was never about the \$6 million. It was about what a loss would mean.

To understand that, think about a factory that dumps waste into a river. The factory profits while the town downstream pays for the clean-up. The damage is real, but it never shows up on the factory's balance sheet.

Social media platforms operate in a similar way. The ad revenue, the engagement, the targeting — that stays with the platform. But the anxiety, the depression, the healthcare bills, the lost productivity — those get quietly absorbed by families, schools, hospitals, and governments. The platform books the profit. Society pays the cost.

Economists call this a negative externality. And for a long time, social media companies did not have to account for it.

The tobacco industry once had a similar arrangement. Cigarette companies sold a product they knew was addictive, while governments around the world picked up the healthcare tab. It took decades, and a specific legal shift, before those companies were made to answer for the costs they had long offloaded onto others. The turning point was not the cigarettes. It was proving in court that the companies already knew what their product was doing.

This verdict follows the same logic.

The internal documents showed that the companies knew their design was habit-forming. And yet, they continued to optimise for it. When the jury chose to treat the platform as a product rather than a passive platform, those hidden costs finally had someone to send a bill to.

Because a deeper problem for these companies is that here, the design itself becomes the product. The algorithm is the revenue engine. If the design becomes legally liable, the very thing that makes them money becomes the source of their legal risk.

Every lawsuit that follows this verdict will use the same argument. And there is no Section 230 defence waiting at the end of it.

Which brings us back to where we started. Remember that half hour you lost on Instagram without quite knowing how?

Well, it turns out someone designed it that way. Someone optimised it, tested it, and shipped it knowing what it could do. And for a long time, the cost of that decision was invisible and spread quietly across living rooms, classrooms, and hospital waiting rooms.

## **TRANSGENDER RIGHTS BILL: FREEDOM TO CHOOSE GENDER OR LAW TO CONTROL?**

- *Deccan Herald*



The Union Government, using its sheer majority in parliament, has passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, in the face of vociferous opposition from

the primary stakeholder, the transgender community. The BJP-led government's disregard for institutional processes, as well as its failure to consult the affected community, was evident in the fact that the apex body representing transgender persons, namely the National Council for Transgender Persons (NCTP), was neither consulted nor informed of the proposed amendments.

The trajectory on transgender rights in India, with its ups and downs, is one we could all have been proud of. The historic judgment of the Supreme Court in *National Legal Services Authority v Union of India* triggered a seismic change, as for the first time the rights of transgender persons to autonomy, dignity and the expression of gender identity were constitutionally recognised. Following this judgment, Thiruchi N Siva introduced a Private Member's Bill which was passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2015. Subsequently, the BJP government introduced its own bill which became the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. The Act itself only partly actualised the rights which the judgment had recognised. Nonetheless, it was an important step forward.

The imperfections of the 2019 legislation were also recognised by the Supreme Court in its judgment in *Jane Kaushik v Union of India (2025)*. In this judgment, the court laid down the principle of omissive discrimination, holding that the 2019 Act, in its very design, perpetuated discrimination against the transgender community through statutory omissions. To remedy these gaps, it constituted a committee chaired by Justice Asha Menon, comprising eminent lawyers conversant with transgender rights as well as representatives of the transgender community.

The 2026 Bill is not based on any consultation with the two key institutional bodies engaged with transgender rights – the NCTP and the Supreme Court committee. Nor was the Bill the outcome of any meaningful community consultation. This democratic deficit in the formulation of the Bill has raised concerns about its impact on transgender rights. The Bill excludes some trans communities from its ambit and criminalises the very process of community formation. At its core, the law seeks to narrowly and strictly define who qualifies as a transgender person.

As per the amendment, the transgender community has three sub categories – the traditional communities like hijra, kinnar, aravani and jogta; those born with intersex variation and those who through 'force, allurements, inducement, deceit or undue influence' are 'compelled' to 'outwardly present a transgender identity by 'mutilation, emasculation, castration or amputation'. The proviso specifically excludes 'persons with different sexual orientations' and 'self perceived sexual identities'.

By contrast, the 2019 Act not only included traditional identities and intersex persons but also explicitly recognised transmen and transwomen, 'whether or not such person has undergone sex reassignment surgery or hormone therapy or laser therapy or such other therapy' as well as genderqueer persons.

The intent to be inclusive is manifest in Section 4(2), which states that a person recognised as transgender shall have the 'right to self-perceived identity'. It is notable that Section 4(2) has been removed in the 2026 amendment.

The 2026 amendment does not recognise the right of persons to choose their gender, a principle that was central to the *National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)* judgment. As the statement of objects and reasons notes, 'the legislative policy was and is intended to protect only those who face severe social exclusion due to biological reasons for no fault of their own and no choice of their own'. In other words, the law conditions the recognition of rights on the

premise that gender expression must not involve choice. Under this interpretation, being transgender is separated from both autonomy and dignity.

The policy is also to exclude those who choose to live outside the gender binary. The 2026 Bill declares that, ‘the purpose was and is not to protect each and every class of persons with various gender identities, self-perceived/sex gender identities or gender fluidities’. The 2026 Bill makes it clear that it has no place for the community of people who dare to choose their gender and express their gender in a way that challenges social stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. The 2026 Bill appears to marginalise or erase communities identifying as genderqueer, non-binary, trans men and trans women.

Even for those who fall within the 2026 definition of transgender, the law maintains a persistent suspicion of the right to self-identify. To obtain a transgender identity certificate, an individual must first secure a certificate from a Medical Board and then submit it to the District Magistrate, who may issue the certificate only if deemed “necessary or desirable.” This provision grants the District Magistrate discretion to deny the certificate based on personal judgement, creating space for biases and prejudices to influence decision-making.

### **TRUMP’S MIXED MESSAGING**

**- Bloomberg**



Those “No Kings” protests this weekend, held in hundreds if not thousands of cities and towns, included more than 8 million people, organizers said. If true, that would mean close to 2.5% of Americans turned out. It would also mean, organizers said, that it was the biggest mass demonstration in the country’s 250-year history. Protests against Trump and his policies also were simultaneously held in cities in Europe.

The focus of the US demonstrations was on the killings of three unarmed American citizens by immigration agents and the administration’s deportation campaign, as well as its war with Iran and a host of other issues Trump opponents associate with increasing authoritarianism.

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Large crowds protested Saturday against the war in Iran and President Donald Trump’s actions in “No Kings” rallies across the U.S. and in Europe. Minnesota took center stage, with thousands of people standing shoulder-to-shoulder to celebrate resistance to Trump’s aggressive immigration enforcement.

Minnesota’s flagship event on the Capitol lawn in St. Paul drew Bruce Springsteen as its headliner. He and other speakers praised the state’s people for taking to the streets over the winter in opposition to a surge of U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement agents.

Springsteen performed “ Streets of Minneapolis,” the song he wrote in response to the fatal shootings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal agents. Springsteen lamented Good and Pretti’s deaths but said the state’s pushback against ICE gave the rest of the country hope.

People rallied from New York City, with almost 8.5 million residents in a solidly blue state, to Driggs, a town of fewer than 2,000 people in eastern Idaho, a state Trump carried with 66% of the vote in 2024.

### **Protesters have a long list of causes**

Trump’s immigration enforcement push, particularly in Minnesota, was just one item on a long list of grievances that also included the war in Iran and the rollback of transgender rights. Speakers at the Minnesota rally decried billionaires’ economic power.

In Washington, hundreds marched past the Lincoln Memorial and into the National Mall, holding signs that read “Put down the crown, clown” and “Regime change begins at home.” ”

Bill Jarcho was there from Seattle, joined by six people dressed as insects wearing tactical vests that said, “LICE” — spoofing ICE — as part of what he called a “mock and awe” tour.

“What we provide is mockery to the king,” Jarcho said. “It’s about taking authoritarianism and making fun of it, which they hate.”

About 40,000 people marched in San Diego, police there said.

In New York, Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, said during a news conference that Trump and his supporters want people to be afraid to protest.

“They want us to be afraid that there’s nothing we can do to stop them,” she said. “But you know what? They are wrong — dead wrong.”

### **Rallies overseas**

Demonstrations were also held in more than a dozen other countries, according to co-executive director Ezra Levin of Indivisible, which spearheaded the events.

In Rome, thousands marched with chants aimed at Premier Giorgia Meloni, whose conservative government saw its referendum for streamlining Italy’s judiciary fail badly this week. Protesters also waved banners protesting Israeli and US attacks on Iran.

In London, demonstrators held banners with slogans such as “Stop the far right” and “Stand up to Racism.”

And in Paris, several hundred people, mostly Americans living in France, along with labor unions and human rights organizations, gathered at the Bastille.

“I protest all of Trump’s illegal, immoral, reckless and feckless, endless wars,” organizer Ada Shen said.

## **TODAY’S HIGHLIGHT IN US ISRAEL - IRAN WAR**

**- *The Hindu***

U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday (March 30, 2026) issued a fresh threat to Iran, saying the U.S. will destroy Iran’s electricity plants, oil wells and Kharg Island unless there is a peace deal.

Israeli media reported that an oil refinery in the northern city of Haifa had been hit on Monday (March 30, 2026), shortly after the military said it had detected new incoming missiles from Iran. Meanwhile, Iran’s military said on Monday (March 30, 2026) that Israel was behind an attack on a desalination plant in Kuwait.

A spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Iran was not seeking nuclear weapons but the issue of whether to remain part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was under review in Parliament.

Iran confirmed on Monday (March 30, 2026) that Revolutionary Guards commander Alireza Tangsiri had been killed, days after Israel said it targeted him in an air strike.

One month of Israel-U.S. war on Iran: A timeline

Explosions shook Tehran on February 28, 2026, as Israel and U.S. launched a joint attack on Iran, targetting its leadership. Israel’s Defence Minister Israel Katz said that the strikes were intended to “remove threats to the State of Israel”, while U.S. President Donald Trump vowed that the strikes would cripple Iran’s military and urged Iranians to rise up against the Islamic republic.

In retaliation, Iran struck U.S. bases and infrastructure across the Gulf, causing airspace closures and civilian casualties. Iran also blocked the Strait of Hormuz — through which roughly 20% of global oil and liquefied natural gas passes — leading to skyrocketing oil prices and resource shortages across the globe.

**AP** here stands for **Associated Press**

**AFP** stands for **Agence France-Presse**

**March 31, 2026 04:29**

Trump says U.S. negotiating with Iran's parliamentary speaker

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday (March 30) threatened widespread destruction of Iran’s energy resources and other vital infrastructure, including desalination plants, if a deal to end the war with Tehran is not reached “shortly.” Trump said the US is negotiating with Iran’s

Parliamentary Speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, in an interview with the New York Post published Monday.

-AP

**March 31, 2026 04:27**

Gulf allies privately make the case to Trump to keep fighting until Iran is decisively defeated

Gulf allies of the United States, led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are urging President Donald Trump to continue prosecuting the war against Iran, arguing that Tehran hasn't been weakened enough by the monthlong U.S.-led bombing campaign, according to U.S., Gulf, and Israeli officials.

After private grumbling at the start of the war that they were not given adequate advance notice of the U.S.-Israeli attack and complaining the U.S. had ignored their warnings that the war would have devastating consequences for the entire region, some of the regional allies are making the case to the White House that the moment offers a historic opportunity to cripple Tehran's clerical rule once and for all.

- AP

**March 31, 2026 04:26**

Netanyahu says Iran's Islamic republic will 'collapse internally'

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced confidence Monday (March 30) that Iran's Islamic Republic would eventually fall, though he again said that was not the objective of the U.S.-Israeli war on the country.

"I think this regime will collapse internally. But at the moment, right now, what we're doing is just degrading their military capacity, degrading their missile capacity, degrading their nuclear capacity, and also weakening them from the inside," Netanyahu told conservative U.S. broadcaster Newsmax.

-AFP

**March 31, 2026 04:22**

Netanyahu says Iran war goals achieved 'beyond halfway point'

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday (March 30) that the war on Iran had achieved more than half its aims, without putting a timeline on when it would end.

"It's definitely beyond the halfway point. But I don't want to put a schedule on it," Netanyahu told the conservative U.S. broadcaster Newsmax.

- AFP

**March 31, 2026 04:17**

Iran parliament body approves Hormuz tolls

Iranian state media reported Monday (March 31) that a Parliamentary commission had approved plans to impose tolls on vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway vital to oil and gas shipments that has been effectively closed due to the West Asia war.

Citing a member of the parliament’s security commission, state TV said the plan involved, among other things “financial arrangements and rial toll systems” and “implementing the sovereign role of Iran”, as well as cooperation with Oman on the other side of the Strait.

-AFP

**March 31, 2026 04:13**

U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth’s broker looked to buy defence fund before Iran attack: FT

U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth’s broker looked to buy a defence fund before the Iran attack, says FT report.

- Reuters

**KAKURO & SUDOKU**

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