

CURRENT AFFAIRS: 19.06.2026

Telegram Ban and Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000

The Delhi High Court upheld the Union Government's decision to temporarily block the messaging platform Telegram ahead of the **NEET-UG 2026 re-examination**. Defending its emergency orders issued under **Section 69A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000**, the Centre argued that Telegram has evolved into a "**new dark web**," becoming a preferred tool for cybercriminals, fraud networks, and examination paper leak syndicates.

What is Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000?

- **Section 69A:** Empowers the Central Government or its specially authorized officers to direct any agency or intermediary to **block public access to any information** generated, transmitted, received, stored, or hosted in any computer resource.
- **Grounds for Blocking:** Such orders can only be invoked in the interest of:
 - Sovereignty and integrity of India
 - Defense of India
 - Security of the State
 - Friendly relations with foreign States
 - Public order
 - Preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offense relating to the above.
- **Emergency Powers:** Under **Rule 9 of the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009**, the government can bypass the mandatory pre-decisional hearing for intermediaries in cases of strict emergency, allowing for immediate enforcement.
- **Supreme Court's Stand (*Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India, 2015*):** The Supreme Court upheld the **constitutional validity of Section 69A**, noting that it contains adequate procedural safeguards, including the requirement to record reasons in writing and the provision of a review committee to oversee the blocking orders.

Concerns Related to the Temporary Block of Telegram

- **Test of Proportionality:** India is Telegram's largest market, with over 150 million users. Critics argue that shutting down an entire platform used by legitimate students, businesses, and content creators **for the crimes of a few violates the constitutional test of proportionality**.
- **Freedom of Speech and Expression:** Blanket bans infringe upon the **fundamental rights of innocent citizens under Article 19(1)(a)** who rely on the platform for communication and livelihood.
- **The "Band-Aid" Solution:** Banning an encrypted app is seen as a **symptom-management tactic**.
- Critics argue that examination fraud (like the NEET-UG leak) stems from systemic institutional vulnerabilities, which cannot be solved merely by shooting the messenger.

Why is Telegram Dubbed as the "New Dark Web"?

- **Absolute Anonymity & Encryption:** Features like hidden phone numbers and end-to-end encryption (in "secret chats") make it difficult for law enforcement agencies to trace malicious actors, leading to a "going dark" challenge for investigators.
- **Retroactive Message Editing:** The platform allows users to edit messages post-delivery **without a visible history**.
 - Fraudsters exploited this feature to alter old messages, inserting fabricated **exam papers after an exam concluded**, making it appear as though the paper was leaked beforehand to create panic and misinformation.
- **Large File Sharing & Bots:** The app permits the sharing of massive files (up to **2GB**) and the use of automated bots, which criminals use to effortlessly distribute **high-resolution PDFs of leaked papers or coordinate illegal activities**.
- **Hub for Cyber Syndicates:** The government noted a sharp rise in cybercrime complaints linked to Telegram, pointing out that it **hosts marketplaces for rented "mule" bank accounts used in money laundering, extortion, and illegal gambling**.

Dark Net (Dark Web)

- The **Dark Net** is a concealed, encrypted segment of the internet that is inaccessible via standard search engines and requires specialized browsers like **Tor (The Onion Router)** to ensure complete user anonymity.
- Unlike the **deep web** which is unindexed but accessible via standard browsers through the exact URL. The dark web routes traffic through proxy servers to **make IP addresses untraceable**.
- Originally developed for secure government communication, it serves legitimate purposes for journalists, political activists, and law enforcement agencies seeking privacy and threat intelligence.
 - However, its heavy end-to-end encryption and reliance on **cryptocurrencies have made it a safe haven for cybercriminals** to anonymously trade contraband, weapons, drugs, and **malware** (such as ransomware and botnets).
- In **India**, merely accessing the dark web is perfectly legal; however, utilizing it for illicit activities is strictly punishable by law.
 - Regulating this trans-border digital space remains highly challenging due to its absolute anonymity, prompting India to actively pursue comprehensive legislative policies and international cooperation, such as through **BRICS**, to combat its growing misuse.

SOLAR-1: 1st U.S. Dedicated Space Weather Monitoring Satellite

The United States has activated SOLAR-1 (formerly SWFO-L1), a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) satellite designed for continuous space weather observations to **provide real-time solar storm warnings** and enhance protection of critical infrastructure and space assets.

- **Location:** It is positioned at the **Sun–Earth Lagrange Point 1 (L1)**, about **1 million miles from Earth**, enabling uninterrupted solar observation.
 - Launched in **September 2025 via SpaceX Falcon 9**, it reached L1 after transit and became fully operational in 2026 after commissioning.
- **Core Function:** Provides real-time monitoring of solar wind and coronal mass ejections (CMEs) to detect and track solar storms.
- **Early Warning Capability:** It improves forecasting speed and efficiency, delivering CME imagery within 30 minutes and in-situ solar wind data within 5 minutes, much faster than older observatories.
- **Instruments:** Equipped with a **coronagraph and in-situ sensors**, it captures solar eruptions and measures space weather conditions in real time.
- **Infrastructure Protection:** It helps **protect critical infrastructure** such as power grids, satellites, GPS, aviation systems, communications networks, and human spaceflight missions like NASA's Artemis programme.
- **Significance:** SOLAR-1 strengthens early warning systems, reduces operational risks, and supports national security, economic resilience, and future deep-space exploration.

The Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951

Why in News?

June 18, 2026, was marked the 75 years of the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951.

What about the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951?

- **Background** – It was enacted in June 1951, just 15 months after the Constitution came into force.
- **Purpose** – It was introduced by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to resolve difficulties arising from judicial interpretations of fundamental rights that struck down laws restricting speech and property rights.
- **3 fundamental changes in**
 - The right to freedom of speech,
 - The right to freedom from discrimination, and
 - The right to property.

What were the major provisions of the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951?

- **Freedom of Speech & Expression** – Article 19(1)(a) was amended to allow reasonable restrictions on free speech.
- Restrictions could be imposed in the interests of

- Security of the State
- Public order
- Friendly relations with foreign states
- Decency or morality
- Contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offence
- This effectively reintroduced limits similar to colonial-era sedition laws.
- **Land Reforms & Property Rights** – Article 31A & 31B were inserted to protect agrarian reform laws like zamindari abolition from being challenged in courts.
- The Ninth Schedule was created to shield specific land reform acts from judicial review.
- **Social Justice & Backward Classes** – Article 15(4) was added to permit special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes.
- It strengthened the Directive Principle in Article 46, which called for promoting the welfare of weaker sections.
- **Parliamentary & State Legislature Procedures** – The amendments to Articles 85, 87, 174, and 176 clarified rules on sessions, prorogation, and dissolution of Parliament and State Legislatures; it allowed more flexibility in legislative functioning.

What are the key judicial interpretations that led to the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951?

- **Romesh Thapar v. State of Madras (1950)** – The Supreme Court struck down press censorship and public order laws.
- The Court ruled that the freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) could only be restricted on grounds explicitly listed in the Constitution.
- **State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan (1951)** – The Supreme Court struck down the Madras government's Communal General Order (caste-based quotas in educational institutions).
- The Court ruled that it violated the Articles 15(1) and 29(2) (prohibition of discrimination).
- This led to the insertion of Article 15(4), allowing states to make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes, SCs, and STs.
- **Right to Property & Land Reforms** – Several High Courts across the country have struck down zamindari abolition laws as violating Article 31 (Right to Property).
- To safeguard these socioeconomic programs, the Parliament inserted Articles 31A & 31B and created the Ninth Schedule to protect agrarian reform laws from judicial review.

What are the criticisms of the First Constitutional Amendment Act?

- **Power under Article 31(A)** – Article 31(A) has protected land reform laws from judicial review cannot be challenged for violating Articles 14 and 19, but critics argued it weakened individual rights in favor of state authority.
- **Limitations on right to free speech & expression** – Three more grounds of restrictions (Public order, friendly relations with foreign states & Incitement to an offence) were introduced with this amendment, 1951.
- This raised several questions and was called 'arbitrary state action' by many judicial scholars, & it weakened constitutional protections against misuse of power.
- **Misuse of the Ninth Schedule** – Initially, the Ninth Schedule was inserted only for agrarian reforms; it later included around 270 laws.
- The Governments began placing any law that risked being struck down as unconstitutional into the Ninth Schedule.
- This practice was widely criticized as a misuse of power, since it allowed laws to bypass judicial review.

What is the significance of India's first constitutional amendment act?

- **Balancing Freedom & Stability** – The First Amendment sought to balance individual freedoms with state stability by ensuring that democracy could survive in its early, fragile years.
- **Land Redistribution** – It enabled land reforms and redistribution, which became a cornerstone of India's socio-economic transformation by empowering peasants and dismantling feudal structures.
- **Foundation for Affirmative Action** – It laid down the foundation for affirmative action policies, allowing special provisions for backward classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes to promote social justice.
- **Judiciary–Legislature Relations** – It set a precedent for resolving conflicts between the judiciary and legislature through constitutional amendments, strengthening the role of Parliament in shaping India's governance.