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# Telegram, Section 69A and Platform-Wide Blocking

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# Telegram, Section 69A and Platform-Wide Blocking

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## WHY IN NEWS

*On June 16, 2026, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) ordered a temporary restriction on the messaging app Telegram. On the same week, a vacation bench of the Delhi High Court (Justice Tejas Karia) upheld the order till June 22, 2026, holding that the blocking power under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 can extend to an entire intermediary platform.*

The restriction was timed ahead of the June 21, 2026 NEET-UG re-examination, amid concerns that Telegram channels were being used to circulate leaked question papers and facilitate organised cheating. Telegram was also directed to disable its message-editing feature till June 30, 2026.

## THE LEGAL ARCHITECTURE: SECTIONS 69A AND 79

India's intermediary regulation rests on two pillars of the IT Act, 2000.

### Section 69A: The Blocking Power

Section 69A empowers the Central Government to direct any agency or intermediary to block public access to information through any computer resource on specified grounds. The procedure is detailed in the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009.

FEATURE	PROVISION
Grounds	Ujivari Current Affairs - <a href="https://ujivari.com">ujivari.com</a> · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS Sovereignty ( <a href="https://ujivari.com/vocab/sovereignty/">https://ujivari.com/vocab/sovereignty/</a> ) and integrity of India, defence, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, or preventing incitement to a cognisable offence
Decision-maker	Designated Officer on recommendation of an inter-departmental committee
Confidentiality	Rule 16 mandates confidentiality of requests and actions
Penalty for non-compliance	Up to 7 years imprisonment plus fine
Judicial validation	Upheld in <i>Shreya Singhal v. Union of India</i> (2015)

## Section 79: The Safe Harbour

Section 79 grants intermediaries conditional immunity (safe harbour) from liability for third-party content, provided they observe due diligence and act on official takedown orders. Loss of due diligence can strip an intermediary of this protection.

### WHAT THE COURT HELD

The Delhi High Court bench made three significant findings.

- 1 Platform-wide blocking is permissible.** The court held that Section 69A is not confined to blocking individual URLs or pieces of content; where the harm is systemic, the power can extend to restricting access to the whole intermediary platform.
- 2 Proportionality was satisfied.** Drawing on the proportionality doctrine from *Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India* (2020), the court described the temporary restriction as the “least restrictive” measure available, given the imminent NEET-UG re-exam and the difficulty of policing thousands of channels in real time.
- 3 A finite, reviewable window.** The restriction was time-bound till June 22, 2026, and the editing-disable direction till June 30, keeping the measure tethered to a specific public-interest objective.

### THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

The order followed a sharp rise in misuse. Complaints linked to Telegram on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) rose from 75,688 in 2023 to roughly 2.75 lakh in 2025, reflecting the platform’s growing role in exam-leak rackets, financial fraud and contraband marketplaces.

YEAR	TELEGRAM-LINKED NCRP COMPLAINTS
2023	75,688
2025	~2,75,000

## ANALYSIS: THE FREE-SPEECH TENSION

A platform-wide block is constitutionally heavier than a content-specific one because it sweeps in lawful speech alongside the targeted harm. The Anuradha Bhasin proportionality test requires that any restriction pursue a legitimate aim, be a suitable and necessary means, and be the least intrusive option, subject to periodic review. The Delhi HC’s insistence on a short, defined window and a narrow purpose (protecting exam integrity) is what allowed the measure to clear that bar. The deeper governance question remains: a recurring pattern of full-platform blocks could chill expression, so the durable answer lies in faster, channel-level cooperation between platforms and law-enforcement rather than **blunt** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/blunt/>) shutdowns.

## WAY FORWARD

- **Granular cooperation:** Strengthen lawful-interception and rapid channel-takedown mechanisms so that systemic blocks become the exception, not the routine.
- **Codify** (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/codify/>) **platform-block standards:** Lay down transparent thresholds and mandatory review timelines for any platform-wide restriction.
- **Exam-security backbone:** Pair digital action with the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 to deter the underlying paper-leak economy.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

**Prelims:** Section 69A vs Section 79 of the IT Act; Blocking Rules 2009; Shreya Singhal and Anuradha Bhasin judgments; NCRP.

**Mains (GS2):** “A platform-wide internet restriction must satisfy the proportionality standard laid down in Anuradha Bhasin.” Examine in the context of intermediary regulation and the right to free speech under Article 19(1)(a) read with reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2).

## FACTS CORNER

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### ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

Section 69A, IT Act 2000: Central Government power to block public access to information on six specified grounds.

Blocking procedure: IT (Blocking) Rules, 2009; Designated Officer + inter-departmental committee.

Section 79: Conditional safe harbour for intermediaries.

Key cases: Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015) upheld 69A; Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020) laid the proportionality and periodic-review test.

Penalty for defying a 69A order: up to 7 years imprisonment and fine.

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com>), *Indian Express* (<https://indianexpress.com>)

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