

**Via electronic mail communication**

31st October 2020

To,

Shri Pema Khandu

Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh

Block No 1, First Floor Room No 107

Civil Secretariat,. Itanagar-791111

cmoffice-arn@gov.in

Dear Sir,

**Subject - Suspension of Internet services in 15 districts of Arunachal Pradesh to curb cheating in State Service Exams**

**Greetings from SFLC.in,**

This is in reference to the newspaper [article](#) dated 30.10.2020 published in Telegraph India titled 'Arunachal Internet Bar to curb Cheating'. A copy of the newspaper article is attached with this email.

The said article stated that Arunachal Pradesh government will be shutting down internet services on 1st November 2020 in 15 of its districts to ensure that no cheating takes place during state civil service exams. The districts where Internet services will be suspended are Lower Subansiri, Upper Subansiri, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit, Tirap, Changlang, Itanagar Capital Region, Papum Pare, Tawang, East Kameng, West Kameng, East Siang, West Siang, Leparada and Upper Siang. The

internet services will remain suspended from 8AM to 12 Noon and then from 12 Noon to 4PM on 1st November 2020.

The Temporary Suspension Of Telecom Services (Public Emergency Or Public Safety) Rules, 2017 issued under section 7 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 is the special law that provides for suspension of Internet services. Under these Rules, temporary suspension of Telecom services can only be ordered for public safety or in public emergency e in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence. Cheating in exams does not fall under any of these categories and switching off the internet to prevent cheating in examinations is a violation of the law.

The Supreme Court of India in 2020 in **Anuradha Bhasin V. Union of India** (Writ Petition (C) No. 1031 OF 2019/1164 Of 2019) held that suspension of the internet has to be necessary, unavoidable and a drastic measure, it has to be done following the procedures laid down in Telecom Suspension Rules, 2017. A state should only consider suspending telecom services if necessary and unavoidable.

We would therefore like to request the State authorities to reconsider shutting down the internet to prevent cheating in examinations. Internet shutdowns have a harrowing impact on citizens and are often disproportionate in nature. Internet shutdowns are bound to cause economic loss, an impact on education, healthcare and other welfare schemes. An internet shutdown during a pandemic can be especially grave considering citizens depend on the internet to get information, work and study. Shutting down the internet to prevent cheating in exams will be a violation of the Telecom Suspension Rules as well the decision of the honorable Supreme Court of India in Anuradha Bhasin V. Union of India.

SFLC.IN is the first Indian legal services organization that works exclusively on technology, law, and policy. As a not-for-profit organization engaged in the empowerment of Indian citizens about their digital freedom and rights, it operates as a collective bringing together different stakeholders to a common platform to further the cause of digital rights. SFLC.in promotes innovation and open access to knowledge by helping policy makers make informed and just decisions regarding the use and adoption of technology. As of 2020

SFLC.in is the only Indian organization to be inducted as a member of the IFEX, a global network to defend the right to freedom of expression and information.

Sincerely,  
Prasanth Sugathan  
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Legal Director  
SFLC.in

Copy to -

1 Shri Satya Gopal  
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Chief Secretary

Arunachal Pradesh

2. Shri Abhyankar Ameya Ajit

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IT Secretary

Arunachal Pradesh