

To

Shri Narendra Modi

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

South Block, Raisina Hill

New Delhi 110011

25 March 2020

Sub: Restoration of 4G in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh in the current context of COVID-19.

Hon'ble Prime Minister,

We, public health practitioners, medical professionals write to you with regard to the plight of the people in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh in the current context of COVID-19.

According to reports, health professionals are unable to or delayed in accessing the important guidelines and updates on not just the prevalence of COVID-19, but also on the latest guidelines and breakthroughs issued by the Government of India, the World Health Organisation (WHO) regarding testing and treatment for people suspected of being exposed to the virus or who are infected with the virus. The very slow internet speed due to 2G services veritably makes access to data, which is extremely urgent in such a situation, nearly impossible.

There are also reports that people are unable to share medical reports nor make video calls to health professionals to seek advice for their health issues. In the current COVID – 19 context, emotional and mental health support are very critical especially in a situation of physical distancing; communications are fundamental to stay in touch with families, friends as well as other support services that are necessary for people's health and well-being. Moreover, Health professionals who require regular supplies of protective equipment and gear are unable to access the same in time.

In 2016, the Human Rights Council of the United Nations General Assembly, declared access to internet to be a basic human right, and as integral for individuals to exercise their rights. Slow speed internet such as 2G services do not allow access to most sites, prevents people from accessing vital and important health information, especially with regard to prevention and treatment of COVID-19. Internet with a good speed is also essential today; a lot of information is shared through the

internet, and substantial work, application to health schemes, most payments, taxes, etc., which have been digitized by the government and cannot be carried out without internet with a good speed. The intermittent access to internet or its slow speed due to 2G services in Jammu and Kashmir as well as Ladakh will aggravate the public health crisis.

The rights of the people, including health professionals, to universal access to information, protective equipment, medicines, testing kits, as well as other support services for their well-being must be fulfilled.

We urge you to urgently consider restoration of 4G internet services in Jammu and Kashmir as well as Ladakh with immediate effect.

Endorsed by

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