Centre gets HC nod to accept scholarship applications online

New Delhi: The Centre on Wednesday got a approval from the Delhi High Court to accept online applications of students for the national scholarship, in order to ensure "transparency", their effective disposal and "disbursement of funds" directly into the beneficiaries' accounts.

Though the Aadhaar number was mandatory for applying for all types of scholarships through the online portal of the government, the Supreme Court had recently asked it to remove a condition making it mandatory for the students to give their unique identification numbers.

Taking note of the Centre's submission that over 80 lakh candidates have applied online this year, which was more than the previous year, a bench of Chief Justice G Rohini and Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal did not allow the petitioner's request to accept offline applications.

Appearing for the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA), Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Sanjay Jain submitted that the students were asked to apply online for the schemes run by the different ministries through new upgraded portal — National Scholarship Portal (NSP 2.0) — which suggested the appropriate schemes for the candidates.

"The aim was to provide a simplified, mission-oriented, accountable, responsive and transparent system for faster disposal of scholarship applications and disbursement of funds directly into the beneficiaries' accounts under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), without any leakage," the ASG told the court.

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ONE-STOP SOLUTION

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moved the court challenging the decision that made it mandatory to apply for scholarships online only. "Lakhs of students may not be able to apply online. They (government) should allow offline application also," the plea had stated.

The government, however, defended its stand to ask for online applications, and said: "The process was a one-stop solution for various services, starting from student applications, application of receipt and processing. Inviting online application was to ensure timely disbursement, to create a transparent database, to avoid duplication, and for harmonisation with different scholarship schemes," the ASG said. The court also disposed of the petition that had claimed that the policy of "compelling" students to apply through the online process "smacks of non-application of mind, since the students most in need of scholarship might not have access to computer, Internet or the requisite knowledge of online application". **— PTI**