

SC PULLS UP STATES FOR REJECTING APPLICATIONS FOR COVID-19 AID

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The Supreme Court on Thursday pulled up States like Maharashtra who rejected applications for COVID-19 compensation merely because they were filed physically and not online.

According to a Bench of Justices M.R. Shah and B.V. Nagarathna, the casual rejection of the “offline” applications made by the bereaved families flies in the teeth of the spirit and intent of the court’s order to bring solace to thousands who lost their loved ones to the virus.

The court had ordered Rs. 50,000 compensation to be paid by the State governments to each of the families of those who died of COVID-19.

“All the State governments have to receive applications whether they are filed online or offline... Wherever claims have been rejected for having filed offline, the State to review the application within one week and pay the compensation,” it stated.

The court stressed that any “technical glitch” in the applications should not be a reason for the States to reject the applications for compensation. It ordered the States to appoint a dedicated officer not below the rank of deputy secretary in the Chief Minister’s Secretariat as the nodal officer in the exercise of granting compensation.

Gesture of welfare

The court had said the *ex gratia* payment of Rs. 50,000 each to the loved ones of every COVID-19 patient is a welfare gesture, and so, essential to a welfare State. Delays and bureaucratic red-tape to release the money or process the application do not augur well. Applications for compensation ought not to be rejected merely on technical glitches. Every reason for denying a claim should be recorded.

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