



# UGC says States can't cancel exams

Delhi, Maharashtra cannot take the decision on their own, Solicitor-General tells SC

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NEW DELHI

The University Grants Commission (UGC) on Monday strongly objected to the Maharashtra and Delhi governments employing the Disaster Management Act to cancel the examinations of students amid the COVID-19 pandemic, saying "sooner this issue is resolved, the better for the students".

Appearing before a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the conduct of examinations was entirely within the domain of the UGC, a statutory body. The States could not go on and cancel examinations on their own.

The UGC had specific guidelines for conducting them, he contended. "The sooner this issue is resolved, the better it is for the students," he said.

The court decided to hear



**In a fix:** The UGC is strongly advocating the conduct of the final year examinations by September 30. \*SAMPATH KUMAR G.P.

detailed arguments on Friday.

In the previous hearing, Mr. Mehta orally made a submission in the court that students should not break their preparation for final year examinations to be conducted "by the end of September 2020".

Though a UGC affidavit filed on July 31 said the examinations were scheduled "by the end of September 2020"

to give varsities sufficient time to make arrangements amid the pandemic, the same affidavit had also gone on to inform the court that information received from 818 universities showed that 603 varsities had conducted their final year exams or were in the process of conducting them during August-September 2020.

Mr. Mehta had added a word of caution to students,

saying "let nobody be under the impression that final exams will be stayed because the Supreme Court is hearing the case. Students should continue to prepare for their exams".

The UGC is strongly advocating the conduct of the final year exams by September 30 in compliance with its July 6 guidelines while keeping in mind the safety and health of students.

The hearing is based on petitions filed by over 30 students challenging the conduct of exams amid the pandemic.

The court had then ordered both Maharashtra and NCT Delhi governments to submit reports on the ground situation in the fight against COVID-19 from their respective State Disaster Management Committees within a week.

In its written response to the students' petitions, the

UGC said the "final year/terminal semester exams is a crucial step in the academic career of a student".

## Revised guidelines

It had said the 'UGC Guidelines on Examinations and Academic Calendar for Universities in view of COVID-19 Pandemic' was revised on July 6 in consultation with the Prof. K.C. Kuhad expert committee.

The revised guidelines offered students the choice to opt for offline (pen and paper) mode of taking examinations, online exclusively or the "blended" manner in which students could alternate between online and physical modes of attending the exams, it stated. Besides, universities could conduct special examinations for students later on as and when feasible "so that a student is not put to any inconvenience or disadvantage".



THE TIMES OF INDIA

# UGC questions Maha, Delhi on decisions to cancel final exams

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**New Delhi:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) told the SC on Monday that final year students enrolled in universities of Delhi and Maharashtra, which have decided to cancel examinations due to the pandemic, may face an uncertain future if the regulator refuses to recognise the degrees awarded to them without an examination. The commission had asked all colleges and universities under it to complete final examinations by September 30. UGC told the SC through solicitor general Tushar Mehta that under the Constitution, UGC was the sole body authorised to take a decision on examinations and questioned the states' authority to cancel final year exams.

"If the states decide not to hold examinations and promote students, and if the UGC refuses to recognise the degrees awarded without examination, it is the students who will face hardship," Mehta told a bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R S Reddy and M R Shah. Hearing a bunch of petitions filed by students with intervention from states, the bench said the states claimed that they had decided to cancel final year examinations under the power conferred on them by the Disaster Management Act. "You (UGC) apply your mind to the play of DM

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Act on holding of examinations and we will hear the matter on Friday," it said.

The petitioners have challenged the UGC's July 6 guidelines directing all universities to complete final year examinations for 2019-20 by September. The Delhi government in an affidavit informed the court that classes in all eight universities in the national capital were completely disrupted due to Covid-19 and the option of conducting online examination was mulled but was found unsuitable because many students were unable to access the internet.

UGC had informed the court last month that of the 818 universities governed by the commission, 209 had completed final examinations, 394 were in the process of holding final examinations and 35 did not have any final year students.