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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

Date of Decision: 11th September, 2020

+ **W.P.(C) 3945/2020 & CM APPL. 21339/2020**

DHRITIMAN RAY

..... Petitioner

Through: Mr. Sarthak Maggon, Advocate.
(M:7045654395)
Mr. Subham Jain, Applicant in person.

versus

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI & ORS.

..... Respondents

Through: Mr. Mohinder J. S. Rupal and Mr. Hardik Rupal, Advocates for DU. (M:9811151216) with Professor D. S. Rawat, Dean (Examinations), Dr. Sanjeev Singh, Director, DUCC and Mr. Ankur Chhibber, Mr. Harsh Dhankar, Ms. Nikunj Arora and Mr. Anshuman Mehrotra, Advocates for R-2.
Mr. Apoorv Kurup and Ms. Nidhi Mittal, Advocates for R-3/UGC.
Ms. Nidhi Raman, CGSC for UOI. (M:9891088658)
Ms. Shefali Vohra, Advocate for R-4.
Ms. Sunieta Ojha, Advocate for Digilocker.
Mr. Shlok Chandra, Ms. Mansie Jain and Mr. Chandratanay Chaubey, Advocates for R-5.

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WITH

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W.P.(C) 4444/2020 & CM APPL. 16012-14/2020

DR. AKSHITA KHOSLA

..... Petitioner

Through: Mr. Sarthak Maggon, Advocate.

versus

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI AND ORS.

..... Respondents

Through: Mr. Mohinder J. S. Rupal and Mr. Hardik Rupal, Advocates of the DU.
Mr. Apoorv Kurup and Ms. Nidhi Mittal, Advocates for R-3/UGC.
Ms. Nidhi Raman, CGSC for UOI/R-4.
Mr. Shlok Chandra, Ms. Mansie Jain and Mr. Chandratanay Chaubey, Advocates for R-5.

12

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WITH

W.P.(C) 4571/2020 & CM APPL. 16511-13/2020

DR. NAMAN BARECHA & ORS.

..... Petitioners

Through: Mr. Sarthak Maggon, Advocate.
versus

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI & ORS.

..... Respondents

Through: Mr. Mohinder J. S. Rupal and Mr. Hardik Rupal, Advocates for DU.
Mr. Apoorv Kurup and Ms. Nidhi Mittal, Advocates for R-3/UGC.
Mr. Rajendra Sahu, Senior Panel Counsel for UOI/R-4. (M:9910008632).
Mr. Shlok Chandra, Advocate with Ms. Mansie Jain and Mr. Chandratanay Chaubey, Advocate for R-5.

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AND

W.P.(C) 4754/2020 & CM APPL. 17158-59/2020

DR MILI ROHILLA & ORS.

..... Petitioners

Through: Mr. Yatharth Rohila, Mr. Vishesh Wadhwa and Ms. Swadha Gupta,

Advocates. (M:9999666038)

versus

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI & ORS.

..... Respondents

Through: Mr. Mohinder J. S. Rupal and Mr.
Hardik Rupal, Advocates for DU.

Mr. Apoorv Kurup and Ms. Nidhi
Mittal, Advocates for R-3/UGC.

Ms. Sunieta Ojha, Advocate for UOI.

CORAM:

JUSTICE PRATHIBA M. SINGH

Prathiba M. Singh, J. (Oral)

1. This hearing has been done by video conferencing.
2. The process of issuance of digital degree certificates for the students who have graduated from the University of Delhi (*hereinafter* 'DU') has rather been an uphill task. Initially, as recorded in order dated 7th August, 2020, a portal being www.digicerti.du.ac.in was set up for issuance of digital degree certificates. The Court was informed by officials of DU that the data of students till November, 2019 is available with the DU. A direction was thus issued that once students have applied on the portal, the digital degree certificates would be issued to them, within a period of one week from registration.
3. More than 30,000 students applied on the online portal to obtain digital degree certificates and DU could not issue the digital degree certificates for various reasons, which are not being gone into presently. One of the reasons for not issuing the same was that, contrary to what the Court was informed on the previous occasion, the data of students was not available with the Examinations branch. Thus, the ultimate result was that the DU issued degree certificates only to the Petitioners and all the other

students who applied for the same did not receive it.

4. In addition, the DU had insisted on submission of hard copies of the applications, which was clearly not in terms of the order dated 7th August, 2020, of this court. On 7th September, 2020, an affidavit was called for from DU as to the current status in respect of the issue of digital degree certificates. In addition, the Court also directed that physical submission of documents shall not be insisted upon. A separate e-mail being digitaldegree@du.ac.in was also directed to be created for those students who require the digital degree certificates urgently, either for further education in India or abroad, or for employment opportunities.

5. The DU has today filed, through its Registrar (Acting), an affidavit stating as under:

“5. Efforts are being made to issue the digital degree certificates to the applicants in adherence to the timeline issued by the Hon'ble Court. Approximately 6246 applicants have submitted their priority option for digital degree certificate till September 9, 2020 at 8.30 P.M. Out of these applications received, 825 applicants have exercised their priority option for submission of degree certificate to foreign universities; 1598 applicants for submission to Indian Universities; and 3196 applicants for Job Application. The verification of the documents submitted by the applicants which falls under the category of urgent cases is under process and after the physical verification of the data of each applicant, the digital degrees will be issued.

*6. It is respectfully submitted that the timeline for issuing digital degree certificates will be **ten working days** for those falling under the category of urgent cases and within **one month** for those*

falling under the category of non-urgent cases respectively, subject to the verification of supportive documents attached.

7. The process for students to download documents from DigiLocker in respect of those students whose data have been transmitted is annexed hereto as ANNEXURE -RA.

8. The University is accepting the request of online degree certificates from students on the portal only and no physical submission of the relevant document is required. The requirement of autogenerated email has been disabled by the University.

9. It is submitted that on the direction of the Hon'ble High Court, necessary incorporation has been done in the portal of digital degree certificates.”

6. A perusal of the above affidavit shows that after the last order dated 7th September, 2020, more than 6000 students have applied seeking digital degree certificates. The break-up of the said students has been given. The officials who have appeared before the Court today, i.e. Professor D.S. Rawat, Dean (Examinations) (Acting) and Mr. Sanjeev Singh, Director, DUCC, have confirmed that once the student applies for issuance of their digital degree certificate on an urgent basis, and submits documents to support the urgency, DU would only verify the urgency on the basis of the documents submitted. Thereafter, the actual data relating to the said student would be verified internally and the digital degree certificate shall be issued through e-mail to the student, within 10 working days.

7. Insofar as non-urgent cases are concerned, the same procedure shall be followed and the digital degree certificates shall be issued within one

month. On a specific query from the Court as to whether any further steps are required to be taken in terms of allotment of more staff, for the purposes of issuance of digital degree certificates, both the officials have confirmed to the Court that they would take whatever steps are required to be taken, to ensure that the above timelines are adhered to.

8. The Petitioner has also raised certain other issues through an additional affidavit, which was filed on the last date i.e. 7th September, 2020. Some of the issues that require consideration are dealt with below:

A) Online degree certificates for students who have graduated prior to 2017.

Orders dated 7th August, 2020 and 7th September, 2020 were passed by this Court in relation to those students who have graduated from 2017 onwards. A submission is made on behalf of the Id. counsel for Petitioner that there are several other students who seek impleadment in these petitions and some of these students have graduated in 2012, 2015 and 2016 as well. Insofar as such students are concerned, on being queried, the officials of the DU have apprised the Court that since these students had passed out almost four to five years ago, or even before, some time would be required for verifying their data. Accordingly, the students who have graduated prior to 2017 shall also submit their applications for obtaining digital degree certificates on the portal “www.digicerti.du.ac.in”. After their application is submitted, DU shall issue their digital degree certificates, within a period of one month.

B) Provision of transcripts

Insofar as transcripts are concerned, currently the procedure that is being followed by DU, as per Professor Rawat, is that a physical application

is made and the transcript is given physically to the students or by postal service. Considering the lockdown, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, applications for transcripts and issuance of transcripts being made physically ought to be done away with. Transcripts and marksheets are as important for students as degree certificates. Accordingly, a procedure should be created by DU for issuance of marksheets/ transcripts through an online mechanism. Let an affidavit be filed by DU within 10 days in respect of an online mechanism/ procedure that can be created for issuance of marksheets/transcripts.

C) Provision of paper degrees.

Insofar as the paper degrees are concerned, the issuance of online digital degree certificates would enable students to take the required steps, on an urgent basis, in respect of further education or employment. However, paper degrees would still have to be provided by the DU. Prof. Rawat submits that the printer has already been engaged, and as and when the data is verified and digital degree certificates are issued, the said data shall simultaneously be transmitted to the printer for printing of the paper degrees. DU officials shall confirm with the printer as to what would be the timeline, which would be required to print and supply the paper degrees to DU after the receipt of the data. In the affidavit which is to be filed by DU, a timeline should be mentioned for obtaining the printed certificates and issuance of the same to students.

D) Inclusion of urgency tab on online application portal.

Insofar as those students who have urgency for receiving the degree certificates, it is submitted that the portal has sufficient features to show the urgency. The online portal has been demonstrated by Mr. Sanjeev Singh to

the Court today, through the share screen option on video conference hearing. The same shows that there are four fields which are provided in the online application form i.e. –

- a) for the purposes of admission to foreign universities,
- b) for the purposes of admission to Indian universities,
- c) for the purposes of employment and
- d) others.

He submits that insofar as the first three categories are concerned, for all students who apply in these categories, their applications would be treated as urgent and the remaining who apply in the ‘others’ category would be treated as the non-urgent applications. The timelines would be accordingly applied for issuance of the digital degree certificates to the students.

9. Insofar as Digilocker is concerned, Ms. Ojha, ld. counsel submits that the data for 2017 has also not been completely transferred by DU. Since the verification of the data is currently taking place, DU shall endeavour to simultaneously transmit the verified data on a course-wise and year-wise basis to Digilocker, so that the load on DU can be reduced to some extent, and the students are able to obtain their documents from Digilocker directly. For future academic years DU ought to be able to transmit the data to Digilocker immediately after the declaration of results of the final year, so that students do not have to wait for the issuance of digital degree certificates. The affidavit to be filed by the DU shall also deal with this aspect.

10. Mr. Sarthak Maggon, ld. counsel for the Petitioner, also submits that he has received several requests from students for issuance of urgent certificates. All such students may apply on the online portal of the DU for

issuance of the digital degree certificates. The digital degree certificates shall be issued to the students within the timelines recorded above.

11. Mr. Sanjeev Singh submits that insofar as the 30,000 students who have applied in the last one month or so for issuance of online digital degree certificates are concerned, an e-mail has been sent to them to log in to the portal once again, and express their urgency in either of the categories mentioned. They are also required to upload the relevant documents. The students may do the needful, upon which the DU shall process their applications and issue online degree certificates within ten working days or one month, depending on the category of urgent or non-urgent requests.

12. Copy of this order or a circular be uploaded on the DU website with the above information, in order to enable students to have access to the same.

13. Let the affidavit by DU be filed within a period of 10 days.

14. List on 28th September, 2020

PRATHIBA M. SINGH
JUDGE

SEPTEMBER 11, 2020
MR/Ak