

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
ORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION
PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION (L) NO.3144 OF 2020

Shailesh Gandhi & Ors.	...	Petitioners
Versus		
Maharashtra State		
Information Commission	...	Respondent

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Mr.Sunil Ahya, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr.A.A.Kumbhakoni, Advocate General with Ms.Geeta Shastri,
AGP for the Respondent/State.

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**CORAM : DIPANKAR DATTA CJ &
G.S.KULKARNI, J.**

DATED : SEPTEMBER 26, 2020.

P.C. :

1 The petitioners have prayed for directions to the respondents to issue appropriate guidelines or directions to all the public authorities in the State of Maharashtra to adopt an appropriate online video conferencing platform for conducting hearings pertaining to proceedings under the diverse statutes applicable to such public authorities as well as for conducting hearing of First Appeals under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

2 While considering the PIL petition on September 15, 2020, we requested Ms.Shastri, learned Additional Government Pleader for the State to take instructions on the issue as raised in this PIL petition.

3 Ms.Shastri has submitted today a letter dated September 22, 2020, issued from the office of the Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra. It appears, on reading of such letter, that the Government of Maharashtra is inclined to adopt appropriate online video conferencing platform for conducting hearing of quasi-judicial/administrative proceedings; however, the procedure may take some time as a meeting will have to be convened with the concerned Departments including the Finance Department and that necessary guidelines and directions would be issued to all the public authorities thereafter. It also appears that some of the authorities are already conducting the hearing through video conferencing.

4 We are surprised that during the period of six months after lock-down was announced, the State did not consider it appropriate to provide for hearing through virtual

platform and is still praying for some more time to make the system operational. Quite reluctantly, we adjourn the hearing of this PIL petition for three weeks, as prayed for by Ms.Shastri, expressing hope and trust that on the returnable date, she would apprise us regarding the steps taken by the Government and thereby not leave any room for complaint to be voiced by the petitioner.

5 Stand over to **October 15, 2020.**

6 This order will be digitally signed by the Personal Assistant of this Court. All concerned will act on production by fax or e-mail of a digitally signed copy of this order.

G.S.KULKARNI, J.

CHIEF JUSTICE

Raju D.
Gaikwad
Digitally
signed by
Raju D.
Gaikwad
Date:
2020.09.26
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