

2025 LiveLaw (SC) 665

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

VIKRAM NATH; J., SANJAY KUMAR; J., N.V. ANJARIA; J.

Writ Petition(s)(Civil) No(s). 456/2025; 30-05-2025

ADITI & ORS. *versus* NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINATION IN MEDICAL SCIENCES & ORS.

National Board of Examination (NBE)- NEET PG 2025- Held- directed NBE to make arrangements to hold NEET PG 2025 in a single shift ensuring transparency. Holding exam in two shifts creates arbitrariness and also does not keep all the candidates at the same level. Any two question papers can never be said to be of an identical level of difficulty or ease. The exam is to be held all over the country, not just one city and contention that examining body could not find enough centres to hold the examination and one shift could not be accepted, considering technological advancements. Hefty examination fees of Rs. 3,500/- from general category and Rs. 2,500/- from SC/STPWD category candidate, therefore, commission has more than enough funds to hold examination in one shift in sufficient number of centres. Process of Normalisation may be applied in exceptional cases but not in a routine manner year after year. Directed Respondents to make arrangements for holding examination in one shift and also ensure that full transparency is maintained and secured centres are identified. (Para 9, 10)

For Petitioner(s): Mr. Sikhil Suri, Sr. Adv., Mr. Satyam Singh, Adv., Mr. Shivam Singh, Adv., Mr. Sanjeev Gupta, Adv., Ms. Manisha Tiwari, Adv., Ms. Mudrika Tomar, Adv., Mr. Amit Kumar Sharma, Adv., Mr. Neeraj Kumar Singh, Adv., Mr. Rajeev Ranjan, Adv., Ms. Pragati Keshri, Adv., Ms. Niharika Rai, Adv., Ms. Urja Pandey, Adv., Ms. Harshita Lulla, Adv., Ms. Vipasha Jain, Adv., Ms. Vidisha Swarup, Adv., Ms. Neema, AOR, Ms. Parul Shukla, AOR, , Ms. Charu Mathur, AOR Ms. Avani Bansal, Adv., Mr. Abhinav Garg, Adv., Ms. Parika Singh, Adv., Mr. Santosh Kolkunda, Adv., Ms. Nandini Bansal, Adv., Mr. Rishi Thakur, Adv., Mr. Tanvi Dubey, Adv., Mr. Yash Dubey, Adv., Mr. Abhisht Hela, Adv., Ms. Sukriti Bhatnagar, AOR, , Mr. Sunil Kumar Sharma, AOR, Ms. Tanvi Dubey, Adv., Mr. Yash Dubey, Adv., Mr. Mekala Ganesh Kumar Reddy, Adv., Mr. Aditya Nema, Adv., Mr. Raghav Sabharwal, AOR,

For Respondent(s): Ms. Maninder Acharya, Sr. Adv., Mr. Kirtiman Singh, Sr. Adv., Mr. Waize Ali Noor, Adv., Mr. Varun Rajawat, Adv., Mr. Ranjeev Khatana, Adv., Mr. Manik Khurana, Adv., Mr. Mrinal Kumar Sharma, AOR, Mr. Prateek Bhatia, AOR Mr. Dhawal Mohan, Adv., Mr. Rajesh Raj, Adv., Ms. Aishwarya Bhati, ASG Ms. Shagun Thakur, Adv., Ms. Shreya Jain, Adv., Mr. Praneet Pranav, Adv., Ms. Chitrangda, Adv., Mr. Pallav Monga, Adv., Ms. Sudarshan Lamba, AOR Mr. Shailesh Madiyal, Adv., Mr. Sudhanshu Prakash, Adv., Mr. Mukul Singh, Adv., Mr. Manish, Adv., Mr. Raghvendra S. Srivatsa, Adv., Mr. Vardhman Kaushik, AOR, Ms. Pankhuri Shrivastava, Adv., Ms. Neelam Sharma, AOR Mr. Alekshendra Sharma, Adv., Mr. Aditya Kumar, Adv., , Mr. Sarthak Ghonkrokta, AOR

ORDER

Heard the learned counsel appearing for the parties.

2. Basically, two issues have been raised in the present petitions.
3. One is that the holding of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Post Graduate) (NEET-PG) 2025 examination in two shifts would give rise to arbitrariness as it does not extend a level playing field to all the candidates, inasmuch as two question papers can never be of the same standard and level of difficulty. Last year, the NEET-PG examination was held in two shifts and the process of normalization was adopted in that scenario but the authorities concerned had ample time to make arrangements to hold the NEET-PG examination in one shift at least this year.
4. The other issue raised in the present petitions is with regard to disclosure of the answer sheets, question papers, etc., of the said examination.
5. At present, we are examining only the question of holding the examination in two shifts or in a single shift, as prayed for by the petitioners.

6. This Court, on 5th May, 2025, issued notice in the present petitions and required the respondents to file their response. Response has been filed and, primarily, two grounds have been taken in support of holding the examination in two shifts. First, that the number of candidates who would appear in the said examination are too large, making it difficult for the examining body to identify sufficient number of secure centres to hold the examination in one shift, and the second is that, if the examination is held in one shift, unscrupulous elements may get involved and there could be malpractices.

7. Further, another contention vehemently urged on behalf of the respondents is that even if the examining body makes an effort to identify more secure centres, it would take time which may result in delaying the holding of the examination as per schedule and the consequent process of counselling and admissions, etc., would also be delayed, which would not be in keeping with the timeline fixed by this Court for completion of the admission process.

8. This contention also deserves to be rejected as there is still enough time for the examining body to identify sufficient number of secure centres so as to hold the examination in one shift.

9. We find that the total number of candidates who have applied this year for the NEET-PG examination is 2,42,678. The examination will be held all over the country and not in one State. We are not ready to accept that in the entire country, considering the technological advancements we have achieved, the examining body cannot find sufficient number of centres to hold the examination in one shift. In this regard, we may also note that the examining body has collected hefty examination fees of ₹3,500/- from each general category candidate and ₹2,500 from each SC/ST/PWD category candidate and is, therefore, possessed of more than enough funds to commission sufficient number of centres so as to smoothly hold the examination in one shift.

10. Holding the examination in two shifts would invariably enable arbitrariness and would not entail at-par evaluation of the comparative merit of the candidates who take the examinations. No two question papers can ever be said to be at an identical level of difficulty or ease. There is bound to be a variation. Normalization may be applied and adopted in exceptional circumstances but not in a routine manner year after year, especially when the number of candidates is not unduly large, as is the case presently.

11. The examination for this year is scheduled to be held on 15th June, 2025. Two weeks' time is still there for the examining body to identify more centres so as to hold the examination in one shift.

12. We, accordingly, direct the respondents to make necessary arrangements for holding the NEET-PG, 2025, examination in one shift, duly ensuring that complete transparency is maintained and secure centres are identified and commissioned.

13. The second issue raised in these petitions can be considered after the examination is held.

14. List on 14th July, 2025.

15. It would be open to the respondents to apply for extension of time in case they find that they are unable to identify the required number of secure centres.