

## COLLEGE FEE REIMBURSEMENTS

# Now, funds to be deposited into students' accounts

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**MUMBAI:** From the next academic year, college students in the state will get money under various fee reimbursement schemes directly deposited in their bank accounts.

The government has decided to disburse the money through direct transfer benefit (DBT) mechanism by depositing it into Aadhar-linked bank accounts of beneficiaries in the form of scholarships, instead of reimbursing their respective institutes. The DBT mechanism, initiated in accordance with the Maharashtra Aadhaar Act 2016, aims at timely disbursement of the money and putting a curb on malpractices in the implementation of government schemes.

On Saturday, the state issued a government resolution (GR) introducing DBT for two schemes run by its higher and technical education department - Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj Shikshan Shulk Shishyavrutti Yojana, under which 50% fees of economically backward class (EBC) students pursuing professional courses is reimbursed, and Dr Punjabrao Deshmukh Vastigruh Nirvah Bhatta Yojna, under which children of small farmers and labours receive a hostel allowance.

"These are the first in the series of schemes which will be brought under the ambit of direct transfers. Other state government departments running fee benefit schemes such as social justice and special assistance, tribal development and medical education and research departments, will come with their own GRs within a week," said Sitaram Kunte, principal secretary, higher and technical education department.

According to the GR, the students will receive their annual scholarship in two instalments, one in each of the two semesters of an academic year. The institutes cannot ask the beneficiaries to pay the fees before money is deposited in their accounts.

The state, however, is notorious for delaying the payments to beneficiaries. "We have told the finance department that success of this scheme will depend on the continuous flow of money," said a state government official.

Activists, however, are not sure if DBT will improve scholarship delivery in the state. "The state is unable to provide the benefits under existing schemes on time. As a result, the students have to suffer," said Priyadarshi Telang, convenor, Dalit Adivasi Adhikar Andolan, a Pune-based organisation.