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Court restrains Stella Maris from taking excess fees

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Chennai: The Madras high court has restrained Stella Maris College from collecting fee in excess of the government-approved fee structure for aided undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the college.

A vacation bench comprising Justice K Venkataraman and Justice C S Karnan passed the interim order on a public interest writ petition filed by a Catholic forum on Wednesday.

In its PIL, the Federation of the Catholic Faithful represented by its general secretary A Clement Selvaraj, submitted that Stella Maris College, established in 1947, was a fully aided college.

Once an educational institution is granted aid or aspires for recognition, certain restrictions imposed by the government would come into operation, the plea says, adding that in May 1997 the government had issued an order stipulating ₹500 as tuition fee for BA course and ₹750 for BSc course. Similar pay structure has been laid down for the postgraduate courses as well.

Instead of collecting the stipulated amount, the college had been collecting exorbitant fees, almost on a par with self-finance courses, it said.

According to the petitioner, the college collected an average



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of ₹11,360 for BA history, and ₹15,060 for BCom. For BSc botany, it collected ₹12,460, it said, adding that the collected fee was about 20 times more than the fee structure prescribed by the government.

Though an aided college could not collect separate fee for “college development”, “student amenities” and “environment study”, the college had been collecting ₹2,500 towards “college development” and ₹2,000 for building maintenance.

Describing the fee as unauthorized, the Catholic forum contended that the expenses incurred by an aided institution for fully aided courses would amount to unlawful and unaccounted account.

He wanted the court direct the college to submit a statement of account of the fee collected for aided undergraduate and postgraduate courses for the academic year 2011-2012 and maintain the amount in a separate bank account.