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## HC order for lockdown in 5 U.P. cities stayed by SC ✓

'Not only option to curb virus spread'

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The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Allahabad High Court order directing the Uttar Pradesh government to impose strict restrictions till April 26 in five cities due to the surge in COVID-19 cases.

A Bench, headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde, passed the order after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Uttar Pradesh, said the State had issued several directions to contain the spread of the coronavirus but to "lock down five cities by a judicial order may not be the right approach".

Mr. Mehta, while arguing that the High Court order would create "immense administrative difficulties", said the State government had taken adequate precaution and actions on its own.

"Issue notice. Until further orders, there shall be an ad interim stay of the impugned order," said the Bench, also comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian.

"However, the petitioner-State government shall immediately report to the High Court about the steps it has

taken and proposes to take within a period of one week in view of the pandemic," the Bench said.

The HC had directed the State government to impose strict restrictions, including closing of malls, shopping complexes and restaurants in five cities - Allahabad, Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar and Gorakhpur - but stopped short of calling it a "complete lockdown".

The High Court had directed the Uttar Pradesh government to impose strict restrictions, including closing of malls, shopping complexes and restaurants, till April 26 in five cities - Prayagraj, Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar and Gorakhpur - but stopped short of calling it a "complete lockdown".

During the arguments, Mr. Mehta said, "Several directions have been issued, some of which the State has already taken steps, but to lock down five cities by a judicial order may not be the right approach."

The Bench noted the submissions of Mr. Mehta, who said the State has issued several directions to contain the spread of COVID-19.