

THE HON' BLE SRI JUSTICE C. PRAVEEN KUMAR

WRIT PETITION No.11620 of 2008

ORDER:

Heard learned counsel for the petitioners and learned Government Pleader for land acquisition.

2. The present Writ Petition came to be filed seeking issuance of writ of Certiorari calling for records relating to and in connection with the impugned proceedings of the District Collector, Krishna, the first respondent in Rc.G.4.1490/ 07, dated 11.02.2008 and G.O.Ms.No.1888, Revenue (K) Department, dated 31.12.1984 and G.O.Ms.No.822, Revenue (K) Department, dated 16.07.1985 while ignoring them without conducting any enquiry as illegal and arbitrary.

3. A perusal of the averments in the affidavit filed in support of the writ petition would show that a notification under Section 4(1) of the Land Acquisition Act (for short, 'the Act of 1894') came to be issued in gazette on 18.04.2007 conferring powers on the second respondent – Revenue Divisional Officer in exercise of the delegated powers under the impugned G.Os. Pursuant thereto, the R.D.O. issued notice under Section 5-A of the Act and served on the individuals to the addresses furnished by them and conducted enquiry on 11.05.2007. Some of the land owners attended the enquiry, filed objections for acquisition of their lands in Komaravolu Village of Pamarru Mandal. After considering their grievances, an enquiry report came to be submitted by the RDO. Basing on the said report, the Collector and the District Magistrate passed the impugned order holding that the land of the petitioners are not covered under the land acquisition and as such consideration of their objections would not arise. Challenging the same, the present writ petition came to be filed.

4. By an order, dated 29.05.2008, this Court while admitting the writ petition granted interim stay of all further proceedings including dispossession of the petitioners from the lands situated in Survey No.168/ 1M1 admeasuring Ac.0.75 cents of Komaravolu Village, Gudivada Division, Pamarru Mandal, Krishna District.

5. A counter came to be filed by the respondents contending that the Government proposed to acquire the land of the petitioners for the purpose of giving house sites to weaker sections under Indiramma Housing Scheme. After conducting survey, the Tahsildar submitted the land acquisition proposals by way of draft notification under Section 4(1) of Act 1894 to the RDO vide letter dated 01.04.2007. After scrutinizing the same, the District Collector approved the Draft Notification issued under Section 4(1) of the Act, on 14.04.2007. Thereafter, the said draft notification was published in the District Gazette, newspapers and in the locality on 18th, 24th, 25th and 26.04.2007 respectively. It also refers to notices published and 5A enquiry to be held on 11.05.2007. It is stated that much prior to the decision taken by the Collector, the petitioners along with another approached this Court and obtained interim stay in W.P.M.P.No.13431 of 2007 in W.P.No.10680 of 2007, due to which no further proceedings were taken up and no award has been passed till date. Subsequently, the above said writ petition was disposed of on 28.12.2007 giving liberty to the petitioners to avail appropriate remedy in the event any decision is taken against their interest pursuant to the enquiry under Section 5A of the Act. Thereafter, the objections raised by the petitioners were considered and rejected by the Collector vide proceedings dated Rc.G4.1490/ 07, dated 11.02.2008. Subsequently, the District Collector approved the draft declaration under Section 6 of the Act on 30.03.2008 and the same was published in District Gazette, Newspapers and locality on 02nd, 20th and 21.04.2008 respectively. Thereafter, notices

in form 6 and 7 under Sections 9 (1), 10, 9(3) and 10 were issued for conducting Award enquiry on 06.05.2008. At the stage when second petitioner attended the award enquiry, the petitioners approached this Court in W.P.M.P.No.14988 of 2008 in W.P.No.11620 of 2008 and obtained interim stay and hence the respondents could not proceed further.

6. Learned counsel for the petitioners submits that though other government lands are available for the purpose of acquisition, so as to provide house sites to weaker sections under Indiramma Housing Scheme, the authorities are intentionally taking the land of the petitioners, which was cultivated by the petitioners for their livelihood.

7. Before proceeding further, it would be appropriate to refer to Section 11-A of the Act of 1894.

“Section 11-A of the Act of 1894: A period within which an award shall be made: The Collector shall make an award under Section 11 within a period of two years from the date of the publication of the declaration and if no award is made within that period, the entire proceedings for the acquisition of the land shall lapse:

Provided that in a case where the said declaration has been published before the commencement of the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Act, 1894, the award shall be made within a period of two years from such commencement.

Explanation: In computing the period of two years referred to in this Section, the period during which any action or proceeding to be taken in pursuance of the said declaration is stayed by an order of a court, shall be excluded.

8. A perusal of the material placed before the Court would show that award enquiry notices were issued for conducting award enquiry on 06.05.2008. On the said date, 2nd petitioner only attended the award enquiry. Without attending the award enquiry, the petitioners approached this Court and obtained interim stay of further proceedings. In

view of the interim order the authorities failed to proceed further under the Act of 1894. Meanwhile, Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (for short “the Act 30 of 2013”) came into force with effect from 01.01.2014. Section 24 (1) (a) of the Act 30 of 2013 prescribes that if the land acquisition proceedings were initiated under the Act and no award under Section 11-A of the Act of 1894 has been made, all the provisions of the Act 30 of 2013 shall apply for determination of compensation.

9. In order to determine the compensation and the period within which an award shall be made, the Act 30 of 2013 provides a procedure under Sections 25 and 26 of the Act 30 of 2013, which reads as under:

“Section 25. Period within which an award shall be made: The Collector shall make an award within a period of twelve months from the date of publication of the declaration under Section 19 and if no award is made within that period, the entire proceedings for the acquisition of the land shall lapse:

Provided that the appropriate Government shall have the power to extend the period of twelve months if in its opinion, circumstances exist justifying the same.

Provided further that any such decision to extend the period shall be recorded in writing and the same shall be notified and be uploaded on the website of the authority concerned.

Section 26. Determination of market value of land by Collector:

(1) The Collector shall adopt the following criteria in assessing and determining the market value of the land namely:

(a) the market value, if any, specified in the Indian Stamp Act, 1899 (2 of 1899) for the registration of sale deeds or agreements to sell, as the case may be, in the area, where the land is situated; or

(b) the average sale price for similar type of land situated in the nearest village or nearest vicinity area; or

(c) consented amount of compensation as agreed upon under sub-section (2) of Section 2 in case of acquisition of lands for private companies or for public private partnership projects, whichever is higher:

Provided that the date for determination of market value shall be the date on which the notification has been issued under Section 11.”

10. Under Section 26 of the Act 30 of 2013, the Collector has to determine the market value of the land for the purpose of payment of compensation under Section 24 of the Act 30 of 2013. Methodology to be adopted for arriving at the market value is prescribed under Section 26 of the Act 30 of 2013. Proviso to Section 26 of the Act 30 of 2013 states that the market value shall be as on the date on which the notification under Section 11 of the Act 30 of 2013 has been issued. An argument is advanced saying that Section 11 of the Act 30 of 2013 has to be equated to Section 4 (1) of the Act of 1894. I am afraid, the same cannot be accepted for the reason that if really the intention of the legislature was to equate Section 11 of the Act 30 of 2013 with Section 4 of the Act of 1894, definitely there would have been some indication to that effect in the Act 30 of 2013. On the other hand, though the Act 30 of 2013 takes care of many situations and shortfalls under the Act of 1894 but it is silent on this aspect. Apart from that it is to be noted that Section 4 of the Act of 1894 does not anywhere indicate fixation of market value. While determining the compensation to be paid in respect of the lands acquired under the Act of 1894, the market value prevailing as on the date of the award is normally taken into consideration. But situation under the Act 30 of 2013 appears to be different. Therefore, the argument that the Section 11 of the Act 30 of 2013 has to be equated to Section 4 of the Act of 1894 cannot be accepted. On this score, the proceedings under Old Act should lapse, giving liberty to initiate fresh proceedings under the Act 30 of 2013.

11. Issue identical to the case on hand came up for consideration before a learned Single Judge of this Court in W.P.Nos.22781 of 2008, 18274 and 18619 of 2009. It was a case where declaration under Section 6 of the Act of 1894 was made in the year 2009 and no award was passed by virtue of *status quo* order granted by this Court. Dealing with Section 11-A of the Act of 1894, a learned single Judge of this Court held as under:

“Under Section 11 (A) of the Act, the award has to be passed within a period of two years from the date of publication of the declaration and in computing the period of two years, the period during which any action or proceeding to be taken in pursuance of the said declaration stayed by the order of Court shall be excluded. Even if that period is excluded and an award is liable to be passed, now it cannot be done under the provisions of the Act, as the action has to be taken as per Section 24 (1) (a) of Act 30 of 2013.

The Interplay of Section 11 (A) of the Act and Section 24 (1) (a) of the New Act was considered by the Apex Court in *Laxmi Devi v. State of Bihar and others*¹, wherein the Apex Court held that the acquisition proceedings initiated under the Act are liable to be *set aside* and the respondents were given liberty to issue a fresh notification, if they so choose, under New Act.”

12. Cases where lands are acquired for the purpose of housing under Indiramma Housing Scheme, came up for consideration before this Court in W.P.Nos.454 and 14091 of 2009. It was a case where notification under Section 4 (1) of the Act of 1894 was issued for acquiring the land admeasuring Ac.5.85 cents situated in Mudinepalli Village, Krishna District for the purpose of providing house sites to the weaker sections of the

¹ (2015) 10 SCC 241

society under Indiramma programme. A learned Single Judge of this Court, while dealing with the said issue, held as under:

“This Court granted interim stay of all further proceedings, as a result of which the respondents could not complete the acquisition proceedings. In the meanwhile, the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 30 of 2013 came into force with effect from 01.01.2014 and seven years have lapsed from the date of publication of Section 4 (1) notification. It is not known whether the earlier scheme of providing house sites to the weaker sections of the society is being pursued by the Government due to changed circumstances.”

13. The Government Pleader for Land Acquisition submits that said orders are not challenged and have become final. Further, the Government Pleader could not place any material on record to show that, the said land is still required for providing house sites to weaker sections. Infact, a doubt is raised as to the very existence of the said scheme.

14. For the aforesaid reasons, the writ petition is allowed and the impugned proceedings initiated under the Act of 1894, are set aside, giving liberty to the respondents to initiate fresh proceedings for acquisition of the above mentioned land of the petitioners, if the land is still required, in accordance with the provisions of the Act 30 of 2013. There shall be no order as to costs.

15. Consequently, miscellaneous petitions, if any, pending in this Writ Petition shall stand closed.

JUSTICE C. PRAVEEN KUMAR

19.01.2017
vhb/ gkv