

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH**

CWP No. 23330 of 2016 (O&M)

Date of decision: 24.01.2017.

M/s SPC-GCC (Joint Venture)

..... Petitioner.

Versus

Union of India and others

..... Respondents.

**CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE S.S. SARON
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE DARSHAN SINGH**

Present: Mr. R.S. Khosla, Senior Advocate, with
Mr. Aman Sharma, Advocate, for the petitioner.

Mr. Karan Singh, Advocate,
for respondent No. 1 - Union of India.

Mr. P.P.S. Thethi, Additional Advocate General, Punjab,
for respondents No. 2 and 4.

Ms. Anju Arora, Advocate, for respondent No. 3.

None for respondent No. 5.

Mr. Tribhuvan Singla, Advocate, for respondent No. 6.

Mr. Jasbir Singh, Advocate, for respondent No. 7.

S.S. SARON, J.

CM No. 16634-CWP of 2016

The written statement filed on behalf of Peacock Environment and Wildlife Protection Society (respondent No.7) is taken on record and exemption from filing certified copy of Annexure R-7/1 is granted and photocopy thereof is taken on record, subject to just exceptions.

The civil miscellaneous application stands disposed of.

CWP No. 23330 of 2016

The petitioner - M/s SPC-GCC (Joint Venture) through its authorized representative Shri Rakesh Kumar Garg by way of the present petition under Articles 226/227 of the Constitution of India seeks quashing of the order dated 19.05.2016 (Annexure P10) whereby the learned National Green Tribunal (respondent No.5) ('Tribunal' - for short) has passed a blanket order restraining the entire State of Punjab from felling and cutting any tree. It is submitted that the said order has been passed without taking into account the projects that had been officially cleared and also had the requisite sanctions as in the present case. A further direction has been sought for directing respondents No. 2 and 3 to complete the felling of trees so as to enable the petitioner - Company to complete its project.

The petitioner - M/s SPC-GCC (Joint Venture) has its office at Barnala. It is a leading private sector road focussed company which is mainly developing infrastructure all over the country in many diverse areas such as roads and bridges.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways addressed a letter dated 07.12.2015 (Annexure P1) to the Secretary, Government of Punjab, Public Works Department, Chandigarh (respondent No. 4) regarding widening of two lane with paved shoulder and strengthening in KM 200.950 to KM 221.850 and KM 227.50 to KM 234.620 of NH-703 Barnala-Mansa-Sardulgarh-Sirsa road in the State of Punjab. In terms of the said letter, technical approval and financial sanction of Hon'ble the President was conveyed under the terms and conditions given in the technical note in respect of the estimates of works as mentioned therein. The Ministry of

Environment and Forests, Northern Regional Office (respondent No.1) issued letter dated 11.05.2016 (Annexure P2) granting in principle approval regarding diversion of 10.41375 hectares of forest land in favour of Central Works Division, PWD (B&R) for improvement of widening and strengthening, raising and four laning of Barnala-Mansa-Sardulgarh-Sirsa road on NH-703 KM 200.950 to 221.850 and KM 227.750 to 234.620 under Forest Division, District Mansa, Punjab.

The petitioner - Company made a bid for the said project and was declared a successful bidder and its tender case for widening of two lane with paved shoulder and strengthening in KM 200.950 to KM 221.850 and KM 227.50 to KM 234.620 of NH-703 Barnala-Mansa-Sardulgarh-Sirsa road in the State of Punjab was accepted. Letter of Award dated 17.06.2016 (Annexure P3) was issued in its favour by the Superintending Engineer, Central Works Circle, Punjab Public Works Department B&R Branch.

It is submitted that the petitioner has deposited an amount of Rs.95,37,892/- on account of diversion of 10.41375 hectares of forest land in favour of Central Works Division, PWD (B&R), Bathinda; however, the work on the same cannot be carried out in view of the impugned order dated 19.05.2016 (Annexure P10) passed by the learned Tribunal (respondent No.5).

We have given our thoughtful consideration to the matter.

The grievance of the petitioner is that despite having made full and complete payment for felling and cutting the trees for which necessary permissions have been granted, it is unable to cut the same due to the order dated 19.05.2016 (Annexure P10) passed by the learned Tribunal whereby it

has restrained the felling and cutting of trees in the entire State of Punjab.

Notice of motion in case was issued on 11.11.2016 and the operation of the impugned order dated 19.05.2016 (Annexure P10) was stayed in respect of the project of the petitioner.

We propose to dispose of the writ petition in terms of the order passed by Hon'ble the Supreme Court of India in an appeal arising out of the same order dated 19.05.2016 (Annexure P10) passed by the learned Tribunal.

It may be noticed that the State of Punjab filed Civil Appeal D No.33942 of 2016, titled 'State of Punjab and others v. Amandeep Aggarwal and others' against the aforesaid order dated 19.05.2016 (Annexure P10) passed by the learned Tribunal, in the Supreme Court. It was submitted on behalf of the State that the order passed by the learned Tribunal was wholly unjustified having regard to the fact that the State of Punjab had obtained all permissions required from the competent authority for felling of trees in connection with various ongoing projects and that without taking note of such permissions, the learned Tribunal was not liable to have issued a blanket ban on cutting of forest trees. This, according to the State, would seriously hamper the ongoing developmental projects in connection with widening of the highways and in particular the construction of National Highway No. 71 in the State of Punjab. It was submitted that while the State of Punjab was ready and willing to furnish whatever information that was required by the learned Tribunal; however, the projects of national importance like widening of the highways mentioned in the said case ought not to be hampered by reason of the said order dated 19.05.2016. It was submitted that Hon'ble the Supreme Court while permitting the petitioner State in the said case to

approach the learned Tribunal for vacation of the stay part of the said order qua National Highway No. 71 so that the ongoing project would not be adversely affected.

Hon'ble the Supreme Court, on the basis of the aforesaid submissions, passed the following order on 28.10.2016:-

“There is in our opinion considerable merit in the submission made by Mr. Rohatgi. It is true that the State has been directed to secure certain information including the trees removed and those planted as also the scheme under which such plantation has been undertaken yet the the blanket ban on felling of trees placed by the Tribunal cannot be allowed to adversely affect the ongoing works on the highway mentioned earlier. In the circumstances therefore we deem it proper to suspend the impugned order for a period of four months from today to enable the State Government to not only execute the ongoing project mentioned above but also the other projects which are likely to be affected by the impugned order. We make it clear that the Tribunal shall be at liberty to pass any fresh order qua the projects that are already approved upon consideration of the materials that the State of Punjab may place on record. We are conscious of the fact that we are not issuing any notice to the respondent while we are suspending a part of the impugned order concerning NH-71. We are doing so only to avoid any delay in service of notice upon the respondent and the final order that may be passed. We however leave it open to the

respondent, petitioner before the Tribunal to raise all such contentions as may be open to him in law after the requisite information is received by the Tribunal.

With the aforesaid observation, this appeal is disposed off.”

In terms of the aforesaid order dated 28.10.2016 passed by Hon'ble the Supreme Court, the present petition is disposed of with the direction that the operation of the impugned order dated 19.05.2016 passed by the learned Tribunal shall remain suspended and shall continue to remain suspended for a period of four months from the date of receipt of certified copy of the order to enable the petitioner to execute the ongoing project in the present case and leaving the learned Tribunal with liberty to pass any fresh order for the project in question upon consideration of the facts which are furnished by the parties. The parties would be at liberty to approach the learned Tribunal to raise all such contentions as may be open to them in law.

The writ petition is accordingly disposed of in the aforesaid terms.

(S.S. SARON)
JUDGE

(DARSHAN SINGH)
JUDGE

24.01.2017
Ramesh

Note:

1.	Whether reasoned/speaking	:	Yes
2.	Whether reportable	:	No