* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

% *Date of decision: 15th December, 2017*

\+ W.P.(C) 6036/2016

RAJ KUMAR ARORA ..... Petitioner

Through: Mr. Bijoy Kr. Pradhan, Adv. and Mr. Rakesh Raushan, Adv.

versus

UNION OF INDIA & ORS. ..... Respondents

Through: Mr. Prasanta Verma, Adv. with Ms. Shalu and Mr. Vinod Tiwari, Advs. for UOI
Mr. Yeeshu Jain, Standing Counsel with Ms. Jyoti Tyagi, Adv. for L&B/LAC
Mr. Sanjeev Sabharwal, Standing Counsel for DDA with Mr. Hem Kumar, Adv.

CORAM:
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE G.S.SISTANI
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE V. KAMESWAR RAO

G.S.SISTANI, J. (ORAL)

1. Mr. Sanjeev Sabharwal has handed over the counter affidavit in Court today. Let the counter-affidavit be taken on record. With the consent of the parties the writ petition is set down for final hearing and disposal.

2. This is a petition filed by the petitioners under Article 226 of the Constitution of India seeking a declaration that the acquisition

proceedings with respect to the land admeasuring 2 Bighas 8 Biswas in Khasra No. 13/4, Khasra No. 13/3 and Khasra No. 13/8, situated in the Revenue Estate of Village Devli, Tehsil Mehrauli, New Delhi, (hereinafter referred to as "subject land") are deemed to have lapsed as neither possession has been taken nor compensation has been paid.

3. The necessary facts to be noticed for disposal of the writ petition are that a notification under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 was issued on 5th November, 1980. Section 6 declaration was made on 21st May, 1985 and thereafter an Award was announced on 5th June, 1987 being Award No. 19/1987-88.

4. Counsel for the petitioner has also drawn the attention of the Court to the counter-affidavit filed by the LAC wherein it has also been admitted that the possession has not been taken and compensation has not been paid. Counsel also draws the attention of the Court to para VII of the counter-affidavit handed over by the DDA in Court, as per which the possession has not been taken.

5. Counsel for the petitioner submits that the case of the petitioner would be covered by the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of ***Pune Municipal Corporation & Anr. V. Harak Chand Misiri Mal Solanki & Ors.***, reported at (2014) 3 SCC 183. Paras 14 to 20, which read as under:

> *"14. Section 31(1) of the 1894 Act enjoins upon the Collector, on making an award under Section 11, to tender payment of compensation to persons interested entitled thereto according to award. It further mandates the Collector to make payment of compensation to them unless prevented by one of the*

contingencies contemplated in sub-section (2). The contingencies contemplated in Section 31(2) are: (i) the persons interested entitled to compensation do not consent to receive it (ii) there is no person competent to alienate the land and (iii) there is dispute as to the title to receive compensation or as to the apportionment of it. If due to any of the contingencies contemplated in Section 31(2), the Collector is prevented from making payment of compensation to the persons interested who are entitled to compensation, then the Collector is required to deposit the compensation in the court to which reference under Section 18 may be made.

15. Simply put, Section 31 of the 1894 Act makes provision for payment of compensation or deposit of the same in the court. This provision requires that the Collector should tender payment of compensation as awarded by him to the persons interested who are entitled to compensation. If due to happening of any contingency as contemplated in Section 31(2), the compensation has not been paid, the Collector should deposit the amount of compensation in the court to which reference can be made under Section 18.

16. The mandatory nature of the provision in Section 31(2) with regard to deposit of the compensation in the court is further fortified by the provisions contained in Sections 32, 33and 34. As a matter of fact, Section 33 gives power to the court, on an application by a person interested or claiming an interest in such money, to pass an order to invest the amount so deposited in such government or other approved securities and may direct the interest or other proceeds of any such investment to be accumulated and paid in such manner as it may consider proper so that the parties interested therein may have the benefit therefrom as they might have had from the land in respect whereof such money shall have been deposited or as near thereto as may be.

17. While enacting Section 24(2), Parliament definitely had in its view Section 31 of the 1894 Act. From that one thing is clear that it did not intend to equate the word "paid" to "offered" or "tendered". But at the same time, we do not think that by use of the word "paid", Parliament intended receipt of compensation by the landowners/persons interested. In our view, it is not appropriate to give a literal construction to the expression *"paid" used in this sub-section (sub-section (2) of Section 24). If a literal construction were to be given, then it would amount to ignoring procedure, mode and manner of deposit provided in Section 31(2) of the 1894 Act in the event of happening of any of the contingencies contemplated therein which may prevent the Collector from making actual payment of compensation. We are of the view, therefore, that for the purposes of Section 24(2), the compensation shall be regarded as "paid" if the compensation has been offered to the person interested and such compensation has been deposited in the court where reference under Section 18 can be made on happening of any of the contingencies contemplated under Section 31(2) of the 1894 Act. In other words, the compensation may be said to have been "paid" within the meaning of Section 24(2) when the Collector (or for that matter Land Acquisition Officer) has discharged his obligation and deposited the amount of compensation in court and made that amount available to the interested person to be dealt with as provided in Sections 32 and 33.*

18. 1894 Act being an expropriatory legislation has to be strictly followed. The procedure, mode and manner for payment of compensation are prescribed in Part V (Sections 31-34) of the 1894 Act. The Collector, with regard to the payment of compensation, can only act in the manner so provided. It is settled proposition of law (classic statement of Lord Roche in Nazir Ahmad[1]) that where a power is given to do a certain thing in a certain way, the thing must be done in that way or not at all. Other methods of performance are necessarily forbidden.

19. Now, this is admitted position that award was made on 31.01.2008. Notices were issued to the landowners to receive the compensation and since they did not receive the compensation, the amount (Rs.27 crores) was deposited in the government treasury. Can it be said that deposit of the amount of compensation in the government treasury is equivalent to the amount of compensation paid to the landowners/persons interested? We do not think so. In a comparatively recent decision, this Court in Agnelo Santimano Fernandes[2], relying upon the earlier decision in Prem Nath Kapur[3], has held that the deposit of the amount of the compensation in the state's revenue account is of no avail and the liability of the state to pay interest subsists till the amount has not been deposited in court.

20. From the above, it is clear that the award pertaining to the subject land has been made by the Special Land Acquisition Officer more than five years prior to the commencement of the 2013 Act. It is also admitted position that compensation so awarded has neither been paid to the landowners/persons interested nor deposited in the court. The deposit of compensation amount in the government treasury is of no avail and cannot be held to be equivalent to compensation paid to the landowners/persons interested. We have, therefore, no hesitation in holding that the subject land acquisition proceedings shall be deemed to have lapsed under Section 24(2) of the 2013 Act."

6. Learned counsel for the LAC relies on para 3 of the counter-affidavit which reads as under:

> *"3. That a large chunk of land admeasuring 11656-09 Bighas in the revenue estate of village Devli was notified u/s 4 by the Government for acquisition vide Notification no. F-9(16)/80-L&B dated 05.11.1980 and notification u/s 6 vide notification no. F-9(23)/85-L&B dated 06.06.1985 for Public Purpose namely planned development of Delhi which also included land comprising in Khasra Nos. 13/4 min (0-15), min (0-9), 13/3 min (0-10), min (0-6) and 13/8 min (0-8). The Award in respect of the subject land was also announced vide Award No. 19/87-88 dated 05.06.1987."*

7. We have heard learned counsel for the parties.

8. From the counter-affidavit which has been handed over by DDA in Court today, it is clear the possession has not been taken. We are of the view the present case is covered by the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of ***Pune Municipal Corporation & Anr.(supra) and various other decisions:***

> *(1) Pune Municipal Corporation & Anr. v. Harakchand Misirimal Solanki & ors., reported at 2014 3 SCC 183;*
> *(2) Union of India and Ors v. Shiv Raj and Ors., reported at (2014) 6 SCC 564;*

(3) Sree Balaji Nagar Residential Association v. State of Tamil Nadu and Ors, Civil Appeal no.8700/2013 decided on 10.09.2014;
(4) Surender Singh v. Union of India & Others, W.P.(C).2294/2014 decided on 12.09.2014 by this Court; and
(5) Girish Chhabra v. Lt. Governor of Delhi and Ors; W.P.(C).2759/2014 decided on 12.09.2014 by this Court.

9. Resultantly, the writ petition is allowed. It is declared that the acquisition proceedings qua the land, which is the subject matter of the writ petition as described above, stands lapsed.

10. The writ petition is allowed in above terms.

G.S.SISTANI, J

V. KAMESWAR RAO, J

DECEMBER 15, 2017/*aky*