

\$~4

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

Date of Judgment :16th January, 2018

+ W.P.(C) 11/2015

UMA MEHRA

..... Petitioner

Through Mr.Nitin Mishra with Mr.Gaurav
Kumar, Advocates.

versus

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

..... Respondents

Through Mr.Chiranjeev Kumar with Mr.
Mukesh Sachdeva, Advs. for R-1/UOI.
Mr.Yeeshu Jain, Standing Counsel
with Ms.Jyoti Tyagi, Adv. for
L&B/LAC.
Mr.Arjun Pant, Adv. for DDA.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE G.S.SISTANI

HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE SANGITA DHINGRA SEHGAL

G.S.SISTANI, J. (ORAL)

1. Counsel for the petitioner, at the outset, submits that inadvertently Khasra no.116 has been mentioned in the writ petition, he restricts his prayer to Khasra no.115, measuring 4 bighas 4 biswas and Khasra no.117, measuring 4 bighas and 16 biswas, situated in the revenue estate of village Sayoorpur, Tehsil Hauz Khas, New Delhi (hereinafter referred to as the 'subject land').
2. This is a petition under Article 226 of Constitution of India filed by the petitioner seeking a declaration that the acquisition proceedings with respect to the subject land stand lapsed in view of section 24(2) of Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition,

Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (hereinafter referred to as '2013 Act') as compensation has not been paid to the petitioner.

3. In this case, a notification under section 4 of Land Acquisition Act, 1894 (hereinafter referred to as 'Act') was issued on 25.11.1980 and a declaration under section 6 was made on 20.05.1987. Thereafter, an award bearing no.10-87-88 was passed on 14.07.1987.
4. Counsel for the petitioner has drawn attention of the Court to the counter affidavit filed by LAC wherein it has been categorically stated that the compensation has been sent in RD. Counsel further submits that since the compensation has not been tendered to the petitioner, the case of the petitioner would be fully covered by ***Pune Municipal Corporation & Anr. v. Harakchand Misirimal Solanki & ors.***, reported at (2014) 3 SCC 183.
5. Mr.Jain, learned counsel for LAC submits that the possession of the subject land was taken on 14.07.1987. Para 7 of counter affidavit filed by LAC reads as under :-

“7. That it is submitted that the lands of village Sayoorpur were notified vide Notification under section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 dated 25.11.1980 which was followed by the Notification under section 6 of the Act dated 15.5.1985. The Award was also passed vide Award No.10/87-88 dated 19.5.87 and the possession of the lands were taken on 14.7.1987 and further handed over to the requisition agency i.e. DDA on the spot, the very same day after preparing necessary documents such as Possession Proceedings. It is submitted that the compensation for Khasra Nos.115 and 117 has been sent in RD, whereas, the compensation for Khasra No.116 was deposited in Court in CM (M) No.1407/2013.”

6. We have heard learned counsel for the parties. Taking into consideration the submissions made and the categorical assertion made in the counter affidavit filed by LAC that the compensation was sent to RD, we are of the view that the case of the petitioner is fully covered by the decision rendered by the Apex Court in the case of ***Pune Municipal Corporation & another*** (*supra*), wherein, it has been held in paras 14 to 20 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, 33 and 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.”

7. Mr.Jain has also raised objection with regard to maintainability of the present writ petition on the ground that the petitioner is a subsequent purchaser. We find the objection to be misplaced on account of decision rendered in the case of ***Govt. of NCT of Delhi Vs. Manav Dharma Trust and another***, reported in ***2017 (6) SCC 751***, para 28 of which, reads as under:-

“28. Thus, the subsequent purchaser, the assignee, the successor in interest, the power-of-attorney holder, etc., are all persons who are interested in compensation/landowners/ affected persons in terms of the 2013 Act and such persons are entitled to file a case for a declaration that the land acquisition proceedings have lapsed by virtue of operation of Section 24(2) of the 2013 Act. It is a declaration qua the land wherein indisputably they have an interest and they are affected by such acquisition. For such a declaration, it cannot be said that the respondent-writ petitioners do not have any locus standi.”

8. Taking into consideration the submissions made and the stand taken by the LAC in the counter affidavit, we are of the considered view that the necessary ingredients for the application of Section 24(2) of the 2013 Act, as has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of India, stand satisfied.
9. Since the award having been announced more than five years prior to the commencement of the 2013 Act and, having regard to the stand taken by the LAC that the compensation has not been tendered to the petitioner, the petitioner is entitled to a declaration that the acquisition proceedings initiated under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 with regard to the subject land are deemed to have lapsed. It is ordered accordingly.

10. The writ petition is disposed of.

C.M. APPL 25/2015

The application stands disposed of in view of the order passed in the writ petition.

G.S.SISTANI, J.

SANGITA DHINGRA SEHGAL, J.

JANUARY 16, 2018/ck/

