

WPA 5969 of 2022

M/s. Lokenath Estate & Export Pvt. Ltd. & anr.
Vs.
The State of West Bengal & Ors.

Mr. Mir Anowar,	...for the petitioners.
Mr. Sanjoy Saha,	...for the WBMDTCL.
Mr. Ashim Ganguly,	
Ms. Karalie Roy,	...for the State.

Affidavit of service filed by the petitioners is taken on record.

It is submitted on behalf of the petitioners that being the highest bidder in e-auction published on 19th September, 2016, the petitioners were granted long term mining lease by virtue of a deed registered on 16th May, 2017 and the lease is due to expire on 15th May, 2022. Due to spread of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown declared by the Government, the petitioners were unable to carry on mining operation for substantial period of time for which they have prayed for extension of the period of lease before the concerned authority.

Learned counsel for the petitioners takes this Court to Clause 5 of Part IX of the deed of lease, which states that if through force majeure the lessee fails to fulfill any of the terms and conditions of the lease within the stipulated time, the period of such delay shall be added to the date fixed by the lease. Learned counsel has also drawn the attention of this Court to the Memorandum dated 13th May, 2020 issued

by the Deputy Secretary, Government of India to the Secretaries of all Central Government Ministries/ Departments which demonstrates that in view of the restrictions placed on the movement of goods, services and manpower on account of the lock down situation, dates for completion of contractual obligations which had to be completed on or after 20th February, 2022 shall stand extended for a period not less than three months and not more than six months. The petitioners submitted a representation before the concerned Authority on 14th March, 2022 in this regard which is yet to be disposed by the Authorities. The petitioners pray for a direction upon the Authorities to consider the representation at the earliest.

It is submitted on behalf of the respondents that the third respondent be directed to consider the representation within a stipulated period of time.

Upon consideration of the submissions made on behalf of the parties and material on record, this Court is inclined to hold that as the representation submitted by the petitioner before the concerned authority is still pending, the concerned authority should be directed to dispose of the same by a reasoned order on merits within a stipulated time frame.

Accordingly, the writ petition is disposed of directing the 3rd respondent to consider and dispose of the representation submitted by the petitioners dated 14th

March, 2022 within a period of one month from the date of communication of this order after taking into consideration the Memorandum dated 13th May, 2020 as well as clause 5 of Part IX of the deed of lease and after giving reasonable opportunity of hearing to all the interested parties including the petitioners, in accordance with law.

The decision taken by the 3rd respondent shall be communicated to the petitioners within a week thereof.

With the above directions, WPA 5969 of 2022 is disposed of. However, there shall be no order as to costs.

Since no affidavit is invited, the allegations contained in the petition are deemed not to be admitted.

Urgent certified website copy of this order, if applied for, be supplied to the parties upon compliance with all requisite formalities.

(Suvra Ghosh, J.)