

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH

Civil Writ Petition No. 12022 of 2018 (O&M)

Date of Decision: 03.02.2022

Jiwan Lal and another

.... Petitioners

Versus

State of Haryana and others

...Respondents

**CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE RAVI SHANKER JHA, CHIEF JUSTICE
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ARUN PALLI, JUDGE.**

Present:- Mr. Roopak Bansal, Advocate, for the Petitioners.

Mr. Ankur Mittal, Addl. Advocate General, Haryana with
Mr. Saurabh Mago, Assistant Advocate General Haryana,
with Ms. Kushaldeep Kaur Manchanda, Advocate,
for the respondents.

(The aforesaid presence is being recorded through video conferencing since the proceedings are being conducted in virtual Court).

RAVI SHANKER JHA, CHIEF JUSTICE

The controversy involved in the matter at hand revolves around the applicability of Section 24(2) of Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 onto the facts of the case wherein the award under section 11 of The Land Acquisition Act, 1894 was announced on 21.07.2003 i.e. more than five years prior to the commencement of the Act of 2013 on 01.01.2014 and as contended by the petitioners, neither the possession of the land is taken nor compensation has been paid/deposited. Therefore, the acquisition proceedings qua the land in question have lapsed in view of Section 24(2) of the Act of 2013. Further the petitioners have sought quashing of the order dated 14.09.2016 vide which the claim of the petitioner under section 24(2) of Act of 2013 was rejected.

2. The controversy cropped up around interpretation of Section 24(2) of Act of 2013 was put at rest by a Constitution Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in case ***Indore Development Authority v. Manoharlal and others AIR 2020 SC 1496*** thereby laying down principles for declaring the acquisition deemed to have been lapsed under section 24(2) of Act of 2013. The Apex Court has discussed in detail all the aspects necessary and relevant for interpreting section 24(2) of Act of 2013, in this regard reference is being made to the concluding paragraph of the judgment which is reproduced herein below:-

'....1. Under the provisions of Section 24(1)(a) in case the award is not made as on 1.1.2014 the date of commencement of Act of 2013, there is no lapse of proceedings. Compensation has to be determined under the provisions of Act of 2013.

2. In case the award has been passed within the window period of five years excluding the period covered by an interim order of the court, then proceedings shall continue as provided under Section 24(1)(b) of the Act of 2013 under the Act of 1894 as if it has not been repealed.

3. The word 'or' used in Section 24(2) between possession and compensation has to be read as 'nor' or as 'and'. The deemed lapse of land acquisition proceedings under Section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 takes place where due to inaction of authorities for five years or more prior to commencement of the said Act, the possession of land has not been taken nor compensation has been paid. In other words, in case possession has been taken, compensation has not been paid then there is no lapse. Similarly, if compensation has been paid, possession has not been taken then there is no lapse.

4. The expression 'paid' in the main part of Section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 does not include a deposit of compensation in court. The consequence of non-deposit is provided in proviso to Section 24(2) in case it has not been deposited with respect to majority of land holdings then all beneficiaries (landowners) as on the date of notification for land acquisition under Section 4 of the Act of 1894 shall be entitled to compensation in accordance with the provisions of the Act of 2013. In case the obligation under Section 31 of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 has not been fulfilled, interest under Section 34 of the said Act can be granted. Non-deposit of compensation (in court) does not result in the lapse of land acquisition proceedings. In case of non-deposit with respect to the majority of holdings for five years or more, compensation under the Act of 2013 has to be paid to the "landowners" as on

the date of notification for land acquisition under Section 4 of the Act of 1894.

5. In case a person has been tendered the compensation as provided under Section 31(1) of the Act of 1894, it is not open to him to claim that acquisition has lapsed under Section 24(2) due to non-payment or non-deposit of compensation in court. The obligation to pay is complete by tendering the amount under Section 31(1). Land owners who had refused to accept compensation or who sought reference for higher compensation, cannot claim that the acquisition proceedings had lapsed under Section 24(2) of the Act of 2013.

6. The proviso to Section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 is to be treated as part of Section 24(2) not part of Section 24(1)(b).

7. The mode of taking possession under the Act of 1894 and as contemplated under Section 24(2) is by drawing of inquest report/ memorandum. Once award has been passed on taking possession under Section 16 of the Act of 1894, the land vests in State there is no divesting provided under Section 24(2) of the Act of 2013, as once possession has been taken there is no lapse under Section 24(2).

8. The provisions of Section 24(2) providing for a deemed lapse of proceedings are applicable in case authorities have failed due to their inaction to take possession and pay compensation for five years or more before the Act of 2013 came into force, in a proceeding for land acquisition pending with concerned authority as on 1.1.2014. The period of subsistence of interim orders passed by court has to be excluded in the computation of five years.

9. Section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 does not give rise to new cause of action to question the legality of concluded proceedings of land acquisition. Section 24 applies to a proceeding pending on the date of enforcement of the Act of 2013, i.e., 1.1.2014. It does not revive stale and time-barred claims and does not reopen concluded proceedings nor allow landowners to question the legality of mode of taking possession to reopen proceedings or mode of deposit of compensation in the treasury instead of court to invalidate acquisition'.

3. The exposition of law made in the aforesaid judgment can be summarized in the following manner for more clarity on the principles laid down by the Constitution Bench:-

- (a) In all those cases wherein the acquisition process had been initiated but the award has not been announced under section 11 of the Act of 1894, on the date of commencement of the Act of 2013 i.e. 01.01.2014, there is no lapse of proceedings and the

same will continue, however, with the rider that the compensation has to be determined under the provisions of Act of 2013. All those cases wherein the award under section 11 of the Act of 1894 has been announced prior to commencement of the Act of 2013, the provisions of the Act of 2013 would have no bearing or application and the proceedings will continue in respect of those cases, as if, the Act of 1894 has not been repealed.

- (b) The word 'or' used in between the both the contingencies of section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 is to be read as '***nor***' or as '***and***' which means that to seek lapsing of the acquisition proceedings both the contingencies must be fulfilled. Meaning thereby, that if the possession had been taken but the compensation was not received, there would be no lapse. Similarly, if compensation has been accepted but the possession has not been taken, there would be no lapsing. (***reference to para 99 and 363(2) of the judgment***)
- (c) As far as the aspect of compensation for the land acquired is concerned, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has categorically observed that the expression paid in the main part of section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 does not include a deposit of compensation in court. What is required to be proved is that the compensation amount was tendered which has been explained in ***para 203*** that the tendering of the amount would mean that the amount is made available to the landowner and that would be a discharge of the obligation to make the payment and in that event such a person cannot be penalized for the default in

making the payment. While referring to section 31(1), 31(2), 34 of the Act of 1894 and comparing them with the para materia provisions i.e. section 71 and 80 of the Act of 2013, the Hon'ble Apex Court has clarified that the only consequence of non-payment of compensation is to make the payment of interest as per section 34 of the Act of 1894. Even the Hon'ble SC has further clarified that once the payment of compensation has been offered/tendered under section 31(1), the acquiring authority cannot be penalized for non-payment as the amount has remain unpaid due to refusal to accept by the landowner. To clarify it further, the Hon'ble SC has further observed that if a landowner has filed the reference for higher compensation he cannot claim that he was not paid the amount.

- (d) While reading the proviso to section 24 of the Act of 2013 to be part of section 24(2) of the Act of 2013, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has clarified that in case, the offer for payment has been made but not deposited, liability to pay amount along with interest subsist and if not deposited for majority of holdings for five years or more, compensation under the Act of 2013 has to be paid to the landowners as on the date of notification for land acquisition under section 4 of the Act of 1894. Regarding the deposit, it has been clarified in **para 242** of the judgment that for the higher compensation to follow, the money should not have been deposited with the Land Acquisition Collector or in the treasury or in the Court with respect to majority of land holdings, meaning thereby if it was deposited in any of the three modes with respect to majority of holdings, the higher

compensation will not follow, but interest under section 34 of the Act of 1894 would be the consequence.

- (e) As regards the mode of taking possession, the Hon'ble Supreme Court had clarified that drawing of inquest report/ memorandum would mean that physical possession has been taken. The law with regard to vesting of land has once again be reiterated to hold that once the possession has been taken under section 16 of the Act of 1894, the land vest in the State and there cannot be any divesting or lapsing.
- (f) While computing the gap period of five years between the date of award and commencement of the Act of 2013, any interim order subsisting is to be excluded which means that after excluding the interim order, the pre-requisite gap period of 5 years is not there, the provisions of section 24(2) cannot be invoked.
- (g) The Hon'ble Court has further clarified that if the acquisition of land had earlier been challenged and the acquisition was upheld, which means the proceeding stood concluded, the umbrella protection of section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 cannot be invoke as it does not revive stale and time barred claims.
- (h) In para 337, the Hon'ble Court has made it clear that the provision of section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 is meant to be invoked by the beneficiaries i.e. landowners who were recorded so at the time of issuance of notification under section 4 of the Act of 1894. Any subsequent purchaser, POA holder or otherwise, cannot invoke the provisions of section 24(2) of the Act of 2013.

4. As per the case put forth by the petitioners, they are owners in possession of the land comprised in Khasra no. 21//6/1 (2-0), 22//10(4-0) situated in Village Tigra, Tehsil and District Gurgaon having A class construction. The petitioners are owners to the extent of alf share in the aforesaid land. The land in question was acquired by the State of Haryana vide notifications dated 24.08.2000 and 22.08.2001 issued under section 4 and section 6 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, followed by award dated 21.07.2003 for the public purpose namely, for development and utilization of land as Residential and Commercial Sector 57 Gurugram. It is the case of the Petitioners that despite having acquired the land in question, the State has failed to take possession of the land and till date they are in actual physical possession of the land in question. Further it has been contended that the Petitioners have not received compensation amount and thus, the acquisition proceedings have lapsed in view of Section 24(2) of the Act of 2013 as both the contingencies prescribed in section 24(2) of Act of 2013 are fulfilled. Earlier they have filed writ petition bearing Civil Writ Petition No. 16946 of 2001 laying challenge to the acquisition proceedings and the said writ petition was dismissed by this court vide order dated 14.11.2003 thereby upholding the acquisition proceedings. He has contended that the land of the co-sharers has already been released from the acquisition proceedings vide order dated 29.01.2018 passed in Civil Writ Petition No. 23810 of 2017, therefore, the land of the petitioners may also be declared to have been lapsed. Earlier also the petitioners have filed writ petition bearing Civil Writ Petition No. 21962 of 2014 which was disposed of vide order dated 06.07.2015 to decide the representation and the respondent authorities have now rejected the said representation vide speaking order dated

14.09.2016 which has now been impugned by the petitioners in the instant writ petition.

5. Per contra Mr. Ankur Mittal, learned Additional Advocate General appearing for the respondent-State of Haryana submits that the instant writ petition filed at the instance of the petitioners deserves to be dismissed at the outset as the petitioners has no locus standi to maintain challenge to the acquisition proceedings in view of the fact that the petitioner are only Dholdars on the land in question and that the acquisition proceedings stands upheld by this court by dismissing the earlier writ petition filed by the petitioners laying challenge to the acquisition proceedings. The law in this regard has been settled by the Supreme Court of India in *Indore Development Authority* (supra) that section 24(2) of Act of 2013 cannot be used as a tool to revive the stale and concluded proceedings wherein the challenge to the acquisition proceedings have been negative by the courts.

6. He further submits that the contention of the petitioners of being in the possession of the land in question is meritless as the possession of the land was taken at the time of announcement of award itself by recording Rapat Roznamcha No. 583 dated 21.07.2003. As regards the compensation for land in question he has argued that amount of compensation was duly tendered i.e. was made available to the petitioners and other land owners. The disbursement of majority of compensation as well as filing of reference application under section 18 of Act of 1894 substantiates the factum of tender of compensation amount. So far as the petitioners are concerned, despite tender of compensation they have not accepted the same and thus, said fact cannot be read against the State.

Therefore, it is his contention that none of the contingencies mentioned in

Section 24 (2) of the Act of 2013 are fulfilled as possession of the land stands duly taken and the obligation of the State to pay the compensation stands discharged with the tender of compensation, hence, the prayer is being made to dismiss the writ petition.

7. With respect to reliance placed on the order dated 29.01.2018 passed in Civil Writ Petition No. 23810 of 2017, he has submitted that same was passed in the era when varied interpretations were being given to section 24(2) of Act of 2013 and the authoritative pronouncement of section 24(2) of Act of 2013 was not there and he has drawn our attention towards the fact that the state has assailed order dated 29.01.2018 before the Supreme Court of India in Special Leave Petition (C) No. 11241 of 2019 and the operation of the judgment passed by this court has been stayed vide order dated 29.04.2019. Thus, the reliance placed on the said order is of no avail to the petitioner.

8. After having perused the pleadings of both the contesting parties and recording their contentions, we have no hesitation to hold that the matter at hand is squarely covered by the principles laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in case *Indore Development Authority (supra)* and the prayer of the petitioners claiming lapsing of acquisition proceedings deserves dismissal. In view of the law laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and the specific observations made in para 359 of the judgment the instant writ petition is not maintainable at the instance of the petitioners as they have already lost earlier challenge to the acquisition proceedings. The writ petition filed by the petitioners bearing Civil Writ Petition No. 16946 of 2001 was dismissed by this court vide order dated 14.11.2003 on merits thereby upholding the acquisition proceedings. Once,

it is so the petitioners cannot be allowed to reopen the proceedings under garb of section 24(2) of Act of 2013.

9. Though the instant writ petition deserves to be dismissed on the sole ground of non-maintainability, yet we deem it appropriate to adjudicate as to whether any of the contingencies of section 24(2) of Act of 2013 are fulfilled or not. The petitioners have contended that they are in actual physical possession of the land in question, however, said averment does not find substance in view of the interpretation of 'physical possession' made by the Hon'ble Apex Court in Indore Development Authority (Supra) wherein the Hon'ble Court has categorically held that the word possession used in the Act of 1894 has same meaning as that of physical possession used in Section 24 (2) of Act of 2013. When the State Government acquires the land and draws memorandum of taking possession which in the present case is by recording Rapat Roznamcha no. 583 dated 21.07.2003, that amounts to taking of the physical possession of the land and once the possession is taken, there is absolute vesting of the land in the State. Thereafter even if the landowner retains the possession of the land, he is a trespasser, and such possession of trespasser enures for his benefit and on behalf of the owner i.e. State. Therefore, as observed above the possession of the land in question was taken by recording Rapat Roznamcha No. 583 dated 21.07.2003, therefore, the possession of the land stands duly taken and same vests in the State free from all encumbrances. Therefore, we have no hesitation to hold that the physical possession of the land in question stands taken and thus, it is not available to the petitioners to contend that they are still in possession of the land in question.

10. As far as aspect of compensation is concerned, it is specific stand of the respondents that the compensation amount was duly tendered and was made available to the landowners including the petitioners. In order to substantiate same reference has been made to the fact that out of total compensation amount of Rs. 73,06,74,448.60/- an amount of Rs. 52,15,17,447.60/- i.e. majority of the compensation has been disbursed coupled with the fact that the petitioners have filed reference under section 18 of Act of 1894. This fact is sufficient to show that the compensation was duly tendered, and the petitioners have chosen not to receive the same, which they are at liberty to receive. Once it is so, the second contingency prescribed in section 24(2) of Act of 2013 also goes and thus, as none of the contingencies prescribed in section 24(2) of Act of 2013 is fulfilled, the deeming fiction of lapsing provided under section 24(2) of Act of 2013 cannot be invoked.

11. Mr. Ankur Mittal on the strength of the facts pleaded in the written statement has vehemently contended that the State acquired the land for the public purpose for utilization of land for Residential and Commercial Sector 57 Gurugram. The land in question is very much essential to achieve the public purpose and it affects the planning of 10m wide service road, 30 m wide sector dividing road of sector 50 & 57, Gurugram as per the layout plan. We have considered this part of argument raised by the respondents and we are in complete agreement with the same as this is an important factor to be kept in mind while dealing with the case arising out of the acquisition of land to achieve the public purpose and it is the state/its authority who is in the best position to decide about utilization of the land acquired, after it having been vested in State.

12. As a sequel of the above discussion and in view of law summarized in para 363 of Indore Development Authority (supra), specifically after having recorded that in the case in hand, the petitioners is a subsequent purchaser, the physical possession of the land in question having been taken, the obligation for payment of compensation stands discharged and also considering that the land in question is very much essential to achieve the public purpose, we have no hesitation to hold that in the instant case, the state has fully discharged its obligation qua both the contingencies occurring in section 24 (2) of 2013 Act and it being so, the present petition merits dismissal and hence, the instant petition is dismissed. Since the speaking order dated 14.09.2016 has been passed in the aforesaid terms, we do not find any illegality in the same and same is accordingly affirmed.

13. Having dismissed the main writ petition, all pending applications, if any also meet the same fate. The writ petition is dismissed. Status quo if any stands vacated.

(RAVI SHANKER JHA)
CHIEF JUSTICE

(ARUN PALLI)
JUDGE

03.02.2022
ravinder

Whetherspeaking/reasoned	Yes/No
Whetherreportable	Yes/No