
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
ORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION

COMM. ARBITRATION APPLICATION NO. 222 OF 2024
WITH
COMM. ARBITRATION PETITION (L) NO. 20813 OF 2024

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Metropolis Healthcare Ltd.

...Applicant

Versus

Express Clinics Pvt. Ltd. & Ors.

...Respondents

Mr. Vaibhav Shirish Kulkarni, *for Applicant/Petitioner.*
None for Respondents.

CORAM : SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN, J.

Date : March 25, 2025

P. C.

1. This Application has been filed under Section 11 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 (*"the Act"*), seeking appointment of an arbitrator in connection with disputes and differences that are said to have arisen between the parties under an agreement dated September 1, 2022. The arbitration agreement is contained in Clause 17 (found at Page 32 of the Application-Exh A). In the interest of brevity, the arbitration agreement is not being extracted here. Suffice it to say that this matter falls within the jurisdiction of this Court.

2. It is apparent from the record that the arbitration agreement was invoked by Applicant on January 23, 2024, to which there is no reply from the Respondents. Despite service, the Respondents have not entered

appearance. It is seen from the affidavit of service dated March 13, 2025, that service has indeed been effect.

3. The scope of review under Section 11 is explicitly set out in Section 11(6A) of the Act. It is now trite law, with particular regard to the Supreme Court's decision rendered by a seven-judge Bench in the *Interplay Judgement*¹ followed by multiple others, including SBI General² and Patel³ that the Section 11 Court ought not to venture beyond examining the existence of a validly existing arbitration agreement that has been formally executed. Even questions of existential substance is a matter that falls squarely in the domain of the arbitral tribunal, in view of Section 16 of the Act.

4. Being satisfied that an arbitration agreement is validly in existence, and that arbitration has been duly invoked, it is in the fitness of things to refer the disputes and differences between the parties in connection with the aforesaid agreement dated September 1, 2022 to arbitration by a Sole Arbitrator.

¹ *In Re: Interplay Between Arbitration Agreement under Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 and Stamp Act, 1899 (2024) 6 SCC 1*

² *SBI General Insurance Co. Ltd. Vs. Krish Spinning, 2024 SCC OnLine 1974*

³ *Ajay Madhusudan Patel Vs. Jyotindra S. Patel, 2024 SCC OnLine, 2597*

5. Commercial Arbitration Petition (L) No. 20813 of 2024 (“**Section 9 Petition**”) relates to the very same matter between the very same parties, seeking certain interlocutory protective reliefs. The Section 9 Petition shall be treated as an Application under Section 17 of the Act by the arbitral tribunal appointed hereby. Given the efflux of time, the Petitioner is at liberty to modify or mould the contents of Section 9 Petition for its consideration as a Section 17 Application.

6. In these circumstances, both this Application as well as the Section 9 Petition are hereby ***finally disposed of***, in terms of the following order:

A] Ms. Nandita Gopalan, a learned advocate of this Court is hereby appointed as the Sole Arbitrator to adjudicate upon the disputes and differences between the parties arising out of and in connection with the Agreement referred to above;

B] A copy of this Order will be communicated to the Learned Sole Arbitrator by the Advocates for the Petitioner within a period of one week from the date on which this order is uploaded on the website of this Court. The Petitioner shall provide the contact and communication particulars of the parties to the Arbitral Tribunal along with a copy of this Order;

C] The Learned Sole Arbitrator is requested to forward the statutory Statement of Disclosure under Section 11(8) read with Section 12(1) of the Act to the Advocates for the Petitioner so as

to enable them to file the same in the Registry of this Court. The Registry of this Court shall retain the said Statement on the file of this Petitioner and a copy of the same shall be furnished by the Advocates for the Petitioner to the Respondents;

D] The parties shall appear before the Learned Sole Arbitrator on such date and at such place as indicated, to obtain appropriate directions with regard to conduct of the arbitration including fixing a schedule for pleadings, examination of witnesses, if any, schedule of hearings etc. At such meeting, the parties shall provide a valid and functional email address along with mobile and landline numbers of the respective Advocates of the parties to the Arbitral Tribunal. Communications to such email addresses shall constitute valid service of correspondence in connection with the arbitration;

E] All arbitral costs and fees of the Arbitral Tribunal shall be borne by the parties equally in the first instance, and shall be subject to any final Award that may be passed by the Tribunal in relation to costs.

7. Needless to say, nothing contained in this order is an expression of an opinion on merits of the matter or the relative strength of the parties. All issues on merits are expressly kept open to be agitated before the arbitral tribunal appointed hereby.

8. All actions required to be taken pursuant to this order, shall be taken upon receipt of a downloaded copy as available on this Court's website.

[SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN, J.]