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* IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI

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Date of Decision: 24.02.2026

+ W.P.(C) 6355/2025

S B TRIPATHI

.....Petitioner

Through: Mr. S.B. Tripathi, Advocate
(Petitioner-in-person).

versus

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

.....Respondents

Through: Ms. Arti Bansal, CGSC with Ms.
Shruti Goel, Advocate for UoI.
Mr. Sumit K. Batra and Ms. Priyanka
Jindal, Advocates for GNCTD.**CORAM:****HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE****HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE TEJAS KARIA****TEJAS KARIA, J. (Oral)**

1. The present Writ Petition has been filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, 1950 read with Section 151 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 in the nature of Public Interest Litigation (“**PIL**”) for issuance of directions for resuming the video conference hearing and to provide water facilities in all ten District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions at Delhi (“**District Commissions**”).
2. The Petitioner is a practising advocate in Delhi since 1991 and has stated that the present Petition has been filed for the benefit of public and advocates, who attend cases before the District Commissions in Delhi.
3. According to the Petitioner, in all the ten District Commissions in Delhi, the hearing through video conferencing mode was available during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the said facility has been discontinued after the pandemic was over. He has further submitted that there is a hybrid mode



of hearing in all the District Courts in Delhi, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (“**State Commission**”) at Delhi, this Court and even the Supreme Court, however, the hearing through video conference mode has been stopped in all the ten District Commissions in Delhi. He has further submitted that as all ten District Commissions, Delhi are located at far away places, it is not possible for the advocates to attend all cases, if they are listed in several Commissions. If the video conference facility is resumed in all ten District Commissions in Delhi, it will be convenient for the advocates and also public at large as there is no reason for discontinuing the same.

4. The Petitioner has also sought directions for increasing the sanctioned strength of the staff in the District Commissions and the State Commission particularly, the support staff. The Petitioner has submitted that there is an acute shortage of support staff in the District Commissions and the State Commission as the sanctioned strength of staff was granted way back in the year 1986 when the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted and since then cases in the various District Commissions have increased manifold and the existing support staff is not in a position to cope up with the workload.

5. The Petitioner also filed a PIL being W.P.(C) 10460/2023 on the issue of shortage of the support staff in the District Commissions. This Court *vide* order dated 14.08.2023 observed as under:

“1. The consumer forums play a pivotal role in safeguarding the rights and interests of consumers. Efficient functioning of these forums is imperative in upholding the very essence of consumer protection. The present Public Interest Litigation seeks redressal for administrative hurdles stemming from an acute staff shortage being encountered by the Delhi District Consumers Dispute Redressal Forum-VII, South West District, Delhi [‘CRDF-VII’]. The order sheet dated 05th July, 2023 in Complaint Case No. 149/20231 highlights these difficulties, revealing the absence of even a singular LDC/



Junior Assistant, in CRDF-VII, thereby highlighting the immediate requirement for bolstering the support staff to ensure efficient delivery of justice.

2. Considering the above, the Department of Food, Supplies & Consumer Affairs of the GNCTD is hereby directed to ensure that an adequate number of support staff is swiftly appointed in all District and State Commissions within a span of thirty days from today. Mr. Satyakam, the learned ASC for GNCTD, has given assurances to this Court regarding the submission of a comprehensive chart within the aforementioned 30-day period. This chart must also enumerate particulars of recruitment initiated post 05th July, 2023, detailing postings of support staff across 10 District Commissions and the State Commission. Furthermore, a comparison of current versus sanctioned support staff strength should be depicted.

3. The Court acknowledges that the Department of Food Supplies and Consumer Affairs ['DOFSCA'] has previously received various proposals from the State Commission and 10 District Commissions, advocating the creation of 82 auxiliary posts for support staff. Pursuant to this, DOFSCA, in its commitment to efficient staffing, sought additional clarifications from the State and District Commissions to forward the proposal to the Administrative Reforms Department, the chief department responsible for the creation of posts. Disappointingly, information from four District Forums remains pending.

4. It has also come to Court's attention that, despite reminders dispatched to these District Commissions, there has been a lackadaisical approach in furnishing the required data, causing an unnecessary impediment in the post creation process. The Court, emphasizing the utmost necessity for supporting staff in these consumer forums, mandates the four defaulting District Forums-North-West, North-East, South-West, and East, to expeditiously provide the necessary data to DOFSCA within a strict timeframe of thirty days. Subsequent to this, the State Government is directed to take a decision within the succeeding thirty days, taking into account the needs of both the State and District Commissions.

5. Re-notify on 06th October, 2023 for further consideration."

6. As the above order was not complied for almost two years, the Petitioner filed a Contempt Petition being CONT.CAS(C) 1394/2024, wherein this Court *vide* order dated 02.04.2025 observed as under:



“8. It is directed that respondent no.3 shall file a tabulation on the vacant posts with respect to each of the Districts, where District Commissions are located, that existed at the time of the filing of the petition and which exists as of today, as per the category of the particular posts.

9. It shall also indicate as to what is holding back respondent no.3 from filling up of these vacancies which are clearly impeding the proper function of these Consumer Forums.”

7. *Vide* order dated 14.05.2025, Respondent No. 2 was directed to file an Affidavit and Reply to this Petition. Accordingly, a short Affidavit dated 05.01.2026 filed on behalf of Respondent No. 2.

8. During the pendency of this Petition, the Petitioner filed an Application being C.M. APPL. 66936/2025 seeking direction to grant approval to a proposal dated 27.06.2025 by the State Commission for procuring infrastructure / equipment for virtual hearing / video conferencing in the District Commissions. *Vide* order dated 29.10.2025, the said Application was disposed of with a direction to Respondent No. 4 / Delhi State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission to provide timelines within which the District Commissions shall be equipped with a video conferencing facility.

9. The Petitioner has filed another C.M. APPL. 82163/2025 seeking direction to fill vacancies of 11 posts in the State Commission and 37 posts in the District Commissions. *Vide* order dated 24.12.2025, the Respondents were directed to file Reply to the said Application. Accordingly, Respondent No. 2 / Government of NCT of Delhi filed Reply dated 05.01.2026 stating that the issue with regard to the vacancy in the State Commission and District Commissions is already pending before this Court as part of W.P.(C) 10460/2023 and CONT.CAS(C) 1394/2024 filed by the Petitioner, which being reagitated despite the pendency of the same before this Court. The



Reply filed by Respondent No. 2 has stated that the posts of support staff have been duly sanctioned from time to time and the substantial manpower is physically available and functioning in the State Commission and the District Commissions. It is also submitted on behalf of Respondent No. 2 that the figures of vacancy stated by the Petitioner do not reflect the actual vacancy as the staff posted in the State Commission and District Commissions are working in diverted capacity from other departments and are drawing salary therefrom. Further, some of the staff have also been hired contractually from outsourced agencies and administrative steps are being undertaken including for sanctioning the posts, deployment of manpower, provision of infrastructure and release of funds. Accordingly, Respondent No. 2 has prayed for dismissal of C.M. 82163/2025 as not being maintainable.

10. The Petitioner has handed over the Objections dated 18.01.2026 to the Short Affidavit dated 05.01.2026 filed on behalf of Respondent No. 4 / State Commission in Court, which is taken on record. As per the said Objections, out of ten District Commissions, video conferencing is functional in only four District Commissions. In support of the same, the Petitioner has annexed copy of the first page of the cause list dated 19.01.2026 of all the ten District Commissions. The Petitioner has also annexed a copy of the Reply to RTI application dated 27.09.2025 received from the State Commission, which states that the State Commission had submitted a proposal dated 27.06.2025 to Respondent No. 2 for procuring the infrastructure / equipment for virtual hearing / video conferencing in ten District Commissions.

11. We have considered the submissions made by the Petitioner-in-person.

12. As regards the issue of increasing the sanctioned strength of the staff in the District Commissions and the State Commission, the same is pending



consideration of this Court in the previous PIL and the Contempt Petition filed by the Petitioner. Hence, no orders are required to be passed in this Petition regarding the increase in the sanctioned strength of staff in the District Commissions and the State Commission.

13. The proposal dated 27.06.2025 submitted by the State Commission was already subject matter of C.M. APPL. 66936/2025, which has been disposed of *vide* Order dated 29.10.2025 directing Respondent No. 4 / State Commission to provide the timelines within which the District Commissions shall be equipped with the video conferencing facility.

14. The cause lists annexed along with the Objections filed by the Petitioner show that four out of ten District Commissions are already using the facility of video conferencing for hearings. As regards the video conferencing facility to be made available in the remaining six District Commissions, it is directed that the Respondents shall take steps to ensure that the video conferencing facility for hybrid hearings is made functional in all the remaining six District Commissions i.e. West District, New Delhi District, North-West District, Central District, East District and South District and the daily cause list being published by all ten District Commissions shall provide the link for video conferencing within a period of eight weeks.

15. The present Petition along with all pending Applications stand disposed of with the aforesaid directions.

TEJAS KARIA, J

DEVENDRA KUMAR UPADHYAYA, CJ

FEBRUARY 24, 2026/ 'A'