

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Delhi Pradesh Citizen Council

Vs.

Union of India

(Y.K.Sabharwal, C.K.Thakker and P.K.I.Balasubramanyan JJ.)

10.08.2006

ORDER

1. Considering the large scale violation of various laws, this Court by judgment dated 16th February, 2006, reported in M.C. Mehta v. Union of India , issued various directions for taking immediate steps to seal residential premises being misused for commercial activities. A Monitoring Committee was constituted to ensure compliance of law and directions of this Court. The judgment, by way of illustration, highlighted various illegal and unauthorized users in many colonies despite the orders and directions made from time to time. After the judgment, in terms of directions contained therein, the sealing of the premises commenced. This led to some of the applicants' filing applications in this Court seeking time to stop the misuser on giving undertaking that the applicants on their own would stop the same by 30th June, 2006.

2. According to the report of the Monitoring Committee, 40,814 affidavits were filed stating therein that the misuser would be stopped by 30th June, 2006. Further, 5006 commercial establishments were sealed by the time the impugned legislation was enacted. In terms of orders dated 1st August, 2006, we have admitted the petitions and issued rule observing that serious challenge had been laid to the constitutional validity of Delhi Laws (Special Provision) Act, 2006.

3. We have heard learned Solicitor General, Mr. Ranjit Kumar, learned senior counsel as amicus and other counsel and Mr. Satya Prakash-in-person on the issue of grant of stay.

Mr. Jasbir Malik, learned counsel appearing for one of the petitioners, challenging the validity of the Act, contends that it is a unique statute which over-rules, annuls and sets aside the decision of this Court dated 16th February, 2006 and other orders passed thereafter in implementation of the directions contained in the main judgment dated 16th February, 2006. Our attention has been drawn by learned counsel to para 24 of the affidavit filed on behalf of the Government of India to demonstrate how the Government authorities, in particular Delhi Development Authority, were responsible for the mess that has been created. Para 24 shows that as per the norms under the Masterplan 1962, 75 District centers should have come up against which only 9 were established, as against 300 Community centers, only 35 came up. Likewise, as against 1250 local shopping centers under the norms of Masterplan 1962, 135 such centers were established and 435 convenient shopping centers were established as against 3000 which should have been set up. In the same

context, learned counsel appearing for Mr.P.K.Dave, former Lt.Governor of Delhi, drew our attention to the Notification dated 20th may, 2006 issued by the Ministry of Urban Development in exercise of power under Section 3 and 5 of the Act directing in effect the local authority to de-seal the premises which have been sealed as directed by this Court and permitting those who had given undertaking to continue unauthorized misuser beyond 30th June, 2006. Directions 1 and 2 of the Notification dated 20th May, 2006 read as under:

1) The premises sealed by any local authority in pursuance of a judgment, order or decree of any court after the 1st day of January, 2006, shall be eligible to be restored, for a period of one year, with effect from the 19th day of May, 2006, to the position as was obtaining as on 1st day of January, 2006.

2) All commercial establishments which are required to cease carrying out commercial activities at their premises by the 30th day of June, 2006, may continue such activities at such premises, as they were being carried out on the 1st day of January, 2006 for a period of one year, with effect from 19th day of May, 2006.

It is vehemently contended that no law can permit or ask the instrumentalities of the State to disobey or disregard the directions of a court. The contention is that the aforesaid two directions have the effect of overruling the directions of this Court and asking the authorities to act contrary thereto.

4. Having heard learned counsel and examined the various facets of the problem, at this stage, we are not inclined to grant a complete stay of the impugned legislation though, prima facie, agreeing with the counsel for the petitioners, we are of the view that it is a unique statute. We are, however, of the view that partial stay deserves to be granted. Directions 1 and 2, as above reproduced, deserve to be stayed since these directions amount to overruling the orders and directions issued by this Court and acts consequent thereupon. This order of stay will mean that the properties which were sealed under the directions of this Court (5006 as per the report of the Monitoring Committee) shall have to be resealed. It will also mean revival of the undertakings given to cease the misuser by 30th June, 2006. Directions will have to be issued to them to now comply with the undertakings despite the fact that the time to comply stood expired on 30th June, 2006 but it is evident that they did not, in all probability, stop misuser by 30th June, 2006 in view of the impugned law and the notice dated 20th May, 2006.

5. Having considered the report of the Monitoring Committee, we extend the time to comply with the undertakings given in respect of 40,814 commercial establishments upto 15th September, 2006. Likewise, the premises which were de-sealed pursuant to the notice dated 20th may, 2006 shall have to be resealed with effect from 16th September, 2006 in case the misuser is not stopped by 15th September, 2006. The Monitoring Committee will examine these cases and ensure the compliance of the undertakings and directions in respect of sealing and file reports in this Court in terms of the directions already issued.

We direct the Monitoring Committee to examine broadly the roads and/or activities in respect whereof undertakings were given as also in respect of 5006 premises sealed so that we may consider issuing directions for stopping of misuser by others similarly placed to those who gave undertakings and to those whose premises already stood sealed before the enactment of the law in question.

6. Learned Solicitor General, on taking instructions and having discussion with the officers, has

filed a brief note on basis whereof we have heard him and other learned counsel. Considering that note, despite the impugned Act and the notices, we direct that following activities shall not be carried on in residential areas:

1. Banquet halls.
 2. Any trade or activity involving any kind of obnoxious, hazardous, inflammable, non-compatible and polluting substance or process.
 3. Retail shops of the following kind:
 - a) building materials (timber, marble, iron and steel and sand), firewood, coal and any fire hazardous and other bulky materials;
 - b) repair shops of automobiles repair and workshop, cycle rickshaw repair, tyre resoling and re-treading, and battery charging;
 - c) Storage, godown and warehousing;
 - d) Junk shop;
 - e) Liquor shop;
 - f) Printing, dyeing and varnishing.
- Note: (i) In (a) will not be included business of finished marble products where cutting and polishing activity of marble is not undertaken.
- (ii) The repair shops and workshops in case of automobile and cycle rickshaws, would presently be not stopped on plots abutting mixed use streets of right of way of 30 m. or more.
4. Retail shops on floors other than ground floor except (a) on streets of 24m right of way or more, (b) where it was permissible as per Master Plan 1962.
 5. Professional activities will not be permissible except by Architects, Chartered Accountants, Doctors and Lawyers. Even by these professionals, professional activity will not be carried on in excess of 50% permissible coverage in residential premises and by anyone who is not a resident in such premises.
 6. Banks and Nursing Homes operating on plots of less than 200 sqm in the case of residential plotted development (160 sqm in villages, special areas and rehabilitation colonies) and more than 1000 sqm, except those operating on master Plan and Zonal Plan roads.
 7. Guest Houses operating on plots of less than 200 sqm in the case of residential plotted development (160 sqm in villages and rehabilitation colonies) and more than 1000 sqm, except those operating in special areas or on Master Plan and Zonal Plan roads.
 8. Pre-primary Schools, fitness centers and gyms operating on floors other than ground floor.

7. The protection of the Act would not be available in respect of the following unauthorized development:

- a) Any construction that is over 15 m. in height in residential plotted development and regularized colonies;
- b) Any construction beyond Ground + 3 floors in residential plotted development and regularized colonies.

Learned Solicitor General has made a statement that the aforesaid prohibition would be applicable to the entire Delhi irrespective of the width of the road.

8. It seems that out of 2025 colonies, 28 colonies are placed in Category A and 51 in Category B. In the colonies of Category A and Category B, except professional activities as above-noted and subject to the stipulations noted, no other commercial activity would be permissible.

It further appears that there are 51 colonies in Category C and 244 in Category D. In respect of the colonies in Category C and D, for the present, what is stated in the public notice dated 21st July, 2006, would be applicable and any user contrary thereto would be stopped with effect from 16th September, 2006. The Public Notice dated 21st July, 2006, as applicable to colonies falling in Category C and D reads as under:

b. In colonies falling in Category C and D, subject to consultation of the RWA in residential plots facing streets/roads with a minimum 18 m ROW in regular residential plotted development, 13.5 m ROW in rehabilitation colonies and 9 m ROW in special area and urban villages.

In addition to these, aforesaid directions would also be applicable to colonies falling in Category C and D.

The aforesaid interim directions would operate till the decision of the Writ Petitions. We make it clear that any direct or indirect violation of these directions would entail consequences of disobedience of the directions of this Court.

9. The Government of India may issue, within one week, requisite directive in exercise of power under Section 3(4) of the Act withdrawing the relief to the above-mentioned categories of the unauthorized development and, accordingly, amend the Notification dated 20th may, 2006, also keeping in view this order.

Pleadings in the Writ Petitions may be completed within three months.

The Monitoring Committee shall give its report in terms of the aforesaid directions within one month. To consider the report and for issue of further directions, list the matter in the second week of September, 2006.

Application for intervention in W.P.(C) No. 266/2006 is allowed.