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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

+ W.P.(C).3227/2020

ANAND VAID

..... Petitioner

Through: Mr. Ankur Mahindro, Advocate

versus

PREETY VAID & ORS.

....Respondents

Through: Mr. Anupam Srivastava, ASC with
Mr. Dhairya Gupta for GNCTD.

Mr. Sanjoy Ghose with Mr. Naman
Jain, Advocate for Delhi High
Court.

Mr. Reetesh Singh,
OSD(Examination), Delhi High
Court.

Mr. Abhijat, Advocate(Secretary,
DHCBA).

CORAM:

HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE HIMA KOHLI

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SUBRAMONIUM PRASAD

ORDER

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16.06.2020

HEARD THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING.

1. Pursuant to the order dated 04.06.2020, an affidavit dated 12.06.2020 has been filed by the Additional Secretary(Law & Justice), GNCTD stating *inter alia* that administrative approval and concurrence of the Finance Department, Government of NCT of Delhi for sanction of expenditure of Rs.3.0 Crores towards digitization of approximately three crore pages of court files has been granted on 11.06.2020. Similarly, administrative approval and expenditure sanction of Rs.3,20,38,200/- has been granted for upgradation/enhancement of the existing leased lines from 34 mbps to 1gbps in all District Courts complexes.

2. As for the explanation sought to be offered by the respondent No.1/ GNCTD for the inaction and its part from 27.11.2018 till date, lesser said the

better. Respondent No.2/GNCTD ought to have realised that due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic followed by the lockdown declared by it, physical hearings in courts were not a viable option and keeping in mind the rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in Delhi and the social distancing norms, holding virtual courts remains the need of the hour. This aspect was duly pointed out to the respondent No.2/GNCTD even in the month of May, 2020 when the entire country was in a lockdown, but did not elicit any positive response till orders on the judicial side had to be passed on the last date, in the present proceedings.

3. At this stage, Mr. Sanjoy Ghose, learned counsel for the Delhi High Court states on instruction from Mr. Reetesh Singh, OSD(Examination), that besides the aforesaid two urgent issues, there are four connected issues which also need to be dealt with by the Delhi Government at the earliest as they are a part and parcel of the project of digitisation/scanning of records and upgradation/enhancement of existing leased lines in the District Court Complexes. In this regard, we have received some more documents on an email through the OSD (Examination), Mr. Reetesh Singh, who states that the same have been forwarded to him by the District Judge(HQs), Tis Hazari. The said documents have been emailed by him to Mr. Anupam Sirvatava, learned counsel for the respondent No.2/GNCTD in the course of the hearing.

4. We may emphasise here that the Committee constituted by Hon'ble the Chief Justice for Graded Opening of the High Court and the Subordinate Courts has directed that Judicial Officers would be entitled to work from home by conducting virtual hearings, it is imperative that sufficient bandwidth be provided to them to run the courts electronically. Any delay in sanction of the connected issues relating to the project of digitisation and scanning of records and upgradation/enhancement of the existing leased lines for the District Court

Complexes, shall be treated as an attempt to impede access to justice for the litigants and viewed seriously.

5. The four pending items that are related to the project of digitisation/scanning of records and upgradation/enhancement of existing leased lines in the District Court Complexes shall be processed by the Delhi Government within two weeks from today under advance intimation to the High Court. As for the remaining sanctions/revalidations relating to other branches and projects of the District Courts pending at the end of GNCTD for general matter, including those relating to the Recruitment Cell, Judicial Branch and pool car sanction, they shall be processed by the respondent/GNCTD within four weeks with advance intimation to the respondent No.3/Delhi High Court.

6. An affidavit of compliance in respect of the first four urgent issues shall be filed by the GNCTD within two weeks with advance copies to the counsel for the parties. Affidavit of compliance with respect to the remaining matters shall be filed within four weeks with copies to learned counsel for the parties.

7. List on 02.07.2020, to await the first affidavit. List on 16.07.2020, to await the second affidavit.

8. At this stage, Mr. Mahendru learned counsel for the petitioner states that he has emailed an SOP which would be of some assistance for digitisation of court records. The said SOP may be forwarded to Mr. Reetesh Singh, OSD (Examination) before the IT Committee of the District Court Complex for perusal.

HIMA KOHLI, J.

SUBRAMONIUM PRASAD, J.

JUNE 16, 2020

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