

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
R E C O R D O F P R O C E E D I N G S

WRIT PETITION(S)(CIVIL) NO(S). 4677/1985

M.C.MEHTA

Petitioner(s)

VERSUS

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

Respondent(s)

[TO BE TAKEN UP AT 12.00 NOON] 1)
I.A. NOS. 13205, 13123 AND 26366/2025 (APPLNS. FOR INTERVENTION AND DIRECTIONS ON BEHALF OF NARELA POWER GRID TRANSMISSION LTD.) 2) IN RE: I.A. NO. 135709/2024 (APPLN. FOR DIRECTION ON BEHALF OF BHAVREEN KANDHARI) IN W.P. (C) NO. 4677/1985 "ONLY" ARE LISTED NAMES OF FOLLOWING ADVOCATES MAY BE TREATED TO HAVE BEEN SHOWN IN THE LIST : MR. S GURU KRISHNA KUMAR, SR. ADVOCATE (A.C.) MS. ANITHA SHENOY, SR. ADVOCATE (A.C.) MR. A.D.N. RAO, SR. ADVOCATE (A.C.) MR. SIDDHARTHA CHOWDHURY, ADVOCATE (A.C.) PETITIONER-IN-PERSON MR. MANAN VERMA, MR. G.S. MAKKER, MR. AMRISH KUMAR, MR. M.K. MARORIA, MR. PRAVEEN SWARUP, MR. NISHIT AGRAWAL, MR. CHIRAG M. SHROFF, MR. MAYANK AGGARWAL, ADVOCATES MS. MANIKA TRIPATHY, ADVOCATES)

Date : 08-04-2025 This matter was called on for hearing today.

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HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE UJJAL BHUYAN

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UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following
O R D E R

IA NO.13123/2025 (APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS ON BEHALF OF POWERGRID NARELA TRANSMISSION LIMITED)

1. We have perused the Report No.10/2025 submitted by the CEC. The prayer in the Application is for grant of permission for felling of 166 trees. Now, with the intervention of the CEC, the

prayer has remained confined to felling of 35 trees and trans-location of 07 trees. The learned counsel for the parties agree that there is an error in clauses (b) and (d). The CEC has recommended grant of permission for felling of 35 identified trees and for trans-location of 07 trees (and not for lopping of 07 trees). We accept the Report. We direct that after compliance is made with the conditions incorporated in clauses (c) and (d) of paragraph 15 of the Report, permission will be granted by this Court for felling of 35 trees and trans-location of 07 trees. After reporting compliance, the applicant (Powergrid Narela Transmission Limited) will apply to this Court for permitting felling of 35 trees and trans-location of 07 trees. After compliance is made by the applicant in terms of the conditions incorporated in clauses (c) and (d) of paragraph 15, a report shall be submitted by the applicant to the CEC so that the CEC can verify and submit a report to this Court.

IA NO.26366/2025 (APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS ON BEHALF OF POWERGRID NARELA TRANSMISSION LIMITED)

2. We have perused the Report No.11/2025 submitted by the CEC. Though the prayer in the Application was for seeking permission for felling of 343 trees, now, with the intervention of the CEC, permission has been recommended for felling of 51 trees and lopping of 13 trees. We accept the Report. We direct that after compliance is made by the applicant (Powergrid Narela Transmission Limited) with the condition clause (c) of paragraph 14 of the Report, the applicant will submit a report to the CEC. The CEC, after verification, will submit a report to this Court regarding

compliance made by the applicant. We permit the applicant to move this Court for grant of permission for actual felling of trees and lopping of trees after the CEC submits a compliance report.

IA NO.135709/2024 (APPLN. FOR DIRECTION ON BEHALF OF BHAVREEN KANDHARI)

3. By an order dated 8th November, 2024, IA No.135707/2024 filed by Bhavreen Kandhari for impleadment was allowed. The Registry is directed to permit filing of the amended memo of parties.

4. Our attention is invited to an order dated 19th December, 2024 passed by this Court. Paragraphs 4 to 10 of the said order read thus:

“4. Today, we are taking up the issue regarding the grant of permissions by the Tree Officers under Section 8 read with Section 9 of the 1994 Act. We are of the view that considering the limited infrastructure available to the Tree Officers and the manner in which the provisions have been implemented, the work of granting permissions for tree felling must be supervised. We, therefore, direct that whenever a Tree Officer grants permission for the felling of 50 or more trees in accordance with Section 8 read with Section 9 of the 1994 Act, the said permission shall not be acted upon unless the same is approved by the Central Empowered Committee (for short, “the CEC”). Whenever the Tree Officers under the 1994 Act grant permission for the felling of 50 or more trees, immediately after granting such permission, the Tree Officers shall forward the entire record of the application along with a copy of the permission to the CEC. Upon receipt of the documents, it will be open for the CEC to call upon the concerned Tree Officer to furnish additional information and additional documents.

5. The CEC will carefully consider the applications and all relevant aspects and will

decide whether the permission deserves to be granted or whether any modification is required to the permission or the terms and conditions imposed under the permission. We make it clear that while granting permission to fell 50 or more trees, unless the case is exceptional, a condition should be imposed that unless compliance is made with the requirement of planting trees by way of compensatory afforestation, actual tree-cutting work shall not be undertaken. After receiving orders of the CEC, the Tree officers shall amend the orders passed by them to give effect to the order of the CEC. What will prevail will be the order of the CEC.

6. The CEC, after examining the entire case, shall be empowered either to allow or reject the application, to allow the application partly or to modify the terms and conditions on which permission is granted by the Tree Officer. After the Tree Officer passes an order granting permission, copies thereof shall not be provided to the applicant. Only after the CEC passes an appropriate order, the Tree Officer will supply the copy of his order as amended by the CEC to the concerned applicant.

7. Our attention is invited to sub-Section (4) of Section 9 of the 1994 Act which introduces a deeming fiction. We direct the Tree Officers to ensure that a decision on every application is taken within sixty days from receipt, as provided in sub-Section (3) of Section 9. We also direct that as soon as an application is received under Section 9, the Tree Officers shall forward copies to the CEC so that the CEC can ensure that sub-Section (4) of Section 9 does not operate. For the time being, in the exercise of our jurisdiction under Article 142 of the Constitution of India, we direct that no one shall act upon the deemed permission under sub-Section (4) of Section 9 without prior consent of this Court.

8. We direct the Tree Officers to inform every applicant as soon as the application is received that even if the Tree Officer grants permission, the same shall not be acted upon unless the application is vetted and cleared by the CEC. As soon as the application is made, the Tree Officer shall issue a communication to the applicant

that under no circumstances will the applicant be entitled to take benefit of sub-Section (4) of Section 9 of the 1994 Act because of the directions mentioned above issued by us under Article 142 of the Constitution.

9. The *proviso* to sub-Section (3) of Section 9 reads thus:

“9. Procedure for obtaining permission to fell, cut, remove or dispose of, a tree.-

(3)...

Provided that no permission shall be granted to any person from the same area on more than two occasions during the same year subject to a maximum area of one hectare at a time.”

10. If the Tree Officer finds that a second application is made in the same year in respect of the same area for the felling of trees and if the total number of trees covered by the first and second applications exceeds 49, the directions issued as above will apply to the second application even if the permission sought by the second application is in respect of fewer than 50 trees and the permission granted on the second application shall not be acted upon unless the same is vetted and approved by the CEC as directed above. We also direct that the Tree Officers shall not entertain any application under Section 9 of the 1994 Act unless there is a declaration supported by documents about the number of applications made under Section 9 of the 1994 Act in that particular year regarding the same property. We also clarify that on the requisition being made by the CEC, the project proponent or the applicant who makes an application under Section 9 of the 1994 Act shall be bound to appear before the CEC.”

5. Our attention is also invited to the orders passed by the High Court of Delhi from time to time. It is pointed out across the Bar that in terms of the order of the High Court of Delhi, even if permission is required for felling of a single tree, an application

is required to be made before the High Court of Delhi.

6. The directions issued by us under the order dated 19th December, 2024, apply when an application is made to the Tree Officer under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994 to grant permission for felling of 50 or more trees. Comprehensive directions have been issued under the said order of this Court for dealing with the applications for grant of permission for felling of 50 or more trees. It is obvious that the orders of the High Court of Delhi will not apply when an application is made for felling of 50 or more trees and the aforesaid directions of this Court will apply which we have quoted above.

7. As far as paragraph 8 of our order dated 19th December, 2024 is concerned, we clarify that the CEC will look into the adequacy of the reasons recorded by the Tree Officer while recommending grant of permission.

8. We are informed that an application made by the Delhi Government before the High Court of Delhi for vacating the interim orders passed by the High Court in Contempt Case No.1149/2022 has been heard and the order has been reserved on 6th February, 2025. We make it clear that subject to what we have directed above, at this stage, we are not dealing with the merits of the orders passed by the High Court of Delhi from time to time. We also make it clear that the High Court is free to decide the application which is pending before it for orders in accordance with law in the light of the orders passed by this Court from time to time and in particular the order dated 19th December, 2024 and the order passed today.

9. As far as prayer clause 'B' in this Application is concerned,

this Court is not dealing with the issue of grant of permission for diversion of forests in Delhi.

10. The Application is, accordingly, disposed of.

(ASHISH KONDLE)
ASTT. REGISTRAR-cum-PS

(AVGV RAMU)
COURT MASTER (NSH)