

ORDER

This matter being moved by the learned counsel for the petitioners was taken up for consideration on 27/06/08 regarding the interim prayer sought for by the petitioners. At the request of the respondent's counsel, the matter was adjourned to 28/06/2008.

2. We have heard Shri Sunil Dutt Yadav, learned counsel for the first petitioner, the second petitioner, party in person and also the respondents' counsel.

3. The learned counsel for the first petitioner submitted that the interim order sought is to restrain the 6th respondent from acting in pursuant to annexures AR1- AR15, namely, the road widening permission as well as to restrain respondents No6 &7 from felling the trees in pursuant to annexure AT1- AT17. The interim order sought for the petitioners is only against respondent No6. Since the permission to widen the roads in Bangalore city and the felling of trees has been ordered, by the seventh respondent, an interim order as prayed for by the petitioners is just and necessary in public interest.

4. The learned counsel for respondent 6 submitted that he requires some more time to file his statement of objections to the main petition as well as the interim order sought for in this petition. He contends that he would like to place on record his objections regarding the locus standi of the petitioners and they are pursuing the private interest in these proceedings. It is also further contended that the impugned orders are appealable under the provisions of Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976, hereinafter called as KPT Act), and therefore contended that no order need be passed in this case. He submitted that by virtue of the notification dated 11/06/2008, the Government of Karnataka has constituted a Tree Authority who is the Appellate Authority under the Act in exercise of the powers upon it conferred under Section 3 of the KPT Act. Therefore, the grievance of the petitioners regarding tree felling order passed by the Tree Officer is appealable to the Tree Authority in terms of said Act. On the other hand, he submitted that notwithstanding the proposed objections he would like to place on record that the 6th respondent has no objection to hear the petitioner's grievance and try to resolve the issue amicably if this court is of the view that the public interest would suffer. He submitted that a Committee has been formed headed by Shri Yellappa Reddy, Retired I.A.S officer, who is the Chairman of the said Committee, to regulate ecology & environment at the time of widening of roads in Bangalore city. The said committee can look into the issues raised in the petition by the petitioners.

5. He submitted that identical public issues regarding pollution of lakes and potable water is presently being monitored by The President, Karnataka High Court Legal Aid Committee, Justice K.L. Manjunath. Therefore he would submitted that notwithstanding his objections to this petition as stated supra, the issued raised in the Petition could also be referred to the said High Court Legal Aid Committee, for its consideration to monitor the same and it can hear the grievances of the petitioners and pass such other suitable orders that may warrant in the circumstances of the case.

6. The learned counsel for the first petitioner and the second petitioner, party in person, while accepting the said proposal submitted that they would prefer to have four persons to assist the committee headed by Mr. Yellappa Reddy, to resolve the issues concerning public at large and carry on with sustainable development of widening of roads in the city. Accordingly, four names were

suggested by them in the memo submitted in this case. In addition, the Counsel for the respondent No.6 has added three more names, to include them as members of the said committee while objecting to the 4th name as suggested by the petitioner. Therefore , both the counsels have now agreed that on behalf of the petitioners/ public the following persons, may be included in the Committee:

1. Dr. Subbarayan Prassanna PhD.,
Retd. Prof.& Dean,
Urban & Regional Planning,
Indian Institute of Management,
271, Phase 2, Ideal Homes,
Bangalore-560092
2. Dr. Shirdi Prasad Thekur,
Community Health Specialist,
Child Specialist,
804, Srinivas, 16th Main, 19th Cross,
Banashankari II Stage,
Bangalore- 560070
3. Dr. Carol Upadhya, PhD,
Fellow, School of Social Sciences,
Social Anthropologist,
National Institute of Advanced Studies,
Indian Institute of Science campus,
Bangalore-560012

And three persons names on behalf of respondent 6, suggested are as follows:

1. Dr. Parameshwar,
Lake Side Hospital
Ulsoor Lake,
Bangalore.
2. Dr. Sharma
Ramky, Ennroo Engineers,
Rajajinagar, Bangalore.
3. Dr. Shekhar
Civil Engineering Dept.,
Indian Institute of Science
Bangalore.

7. The learned Advocate General, on behalf of respondents 1 to 3 Shri Udaya Holla submitted that in the larger public interest the State and its Officers- respondents would welcome any suggestions that may be made to it by the public, provided it is in public interest and in conformity with law to see that respondent No.6 should carry on with its works to widen the roads in the City. He would have no objection for the above mentioned persons assisting the Committee in resolving the issues raised by the

petitioners receiving the valuable suggestions from the persons whose names referred to above for the purpose of carrying on with the developmental work in the interest of public.

8. The suggestions made and its acceptance by all the parties before the court and the learned Advocate General and other counsel is a welcome sign with a view to find out workable solution to redress the public interest . This court is not only concerned with the public sensitivity regarding the felling of trees and the widening of roads on the one hand but also with regard to the sustained economic and social development of society at large on the other. An ideal balanced view is therefore necessary in a matter of this nature. The Committee constituted by respondent No.6 under the Statute are duty bound to take into consideration the views of the public before any developmental works is to be undertaken keeping in view the public interest. It is needless to mention that the suggestions, if any, by the public, would necessarily have to be considered, provided they are in true larger public interest within the realm of the law and in furtherance of sustainable developmental works to be carried on by the S Statutory Authorities. Larger public interest would therefore prevail over the minor public interest. In view of the suggestions made and accepted by the parties, we do not think it appropriate to grant an interim order for the present. The above committee constituted by the 6th respondent would pass such orders as are necessary by taking into consideration all the suggestion that may be offered by the above newly added Members as proposed by both the petitioners and 6th respondent's counsel keeping in mind the various legal grounds urged in the Petition and also to see that the sustainable development works are carried out to widen the roads in the city in the larger interest of the public.

9. For reasons stated supra we pass the following order:

We refer this matter to the Karnataka High court Legal Aid Committee headed by its President , Justice K.L.Manjunath for resolving the issues that are raised by hearing all the parties from time to time and monitor the sustainable developmental works to be executed by the 6th respondent.

1) The Committee would hear the parties, the Committee constituted by the 6th respondent to which we have directed to include the name of 6 persons suggested as above and such state officials are required, to determine the issues regarding the widening of roads, the felling of trees and also trees replanting in the city as required under Section 8 (5) of the Karnataka Preservation of Tree Act, 1976.

2) The persons who are included in the Committee headed by Mr. Yellapa Reddy shall offer suggestions to assist it in the decision making process to maintain ecology and environment in the urban area where the widening of road work will be executed.

3) The parties are at liberty to request the Committee for an interim arrangement with regard to widening of the roads and the felling and replanting of trees in urban area where the widening of the roads work is launched and executed.

4) The Committee shall also take into consideration not only the felling of trees and the widening of roads to reach the international airport but also such other incidental and related matters which result in the traffic hazards and also in relation to public/private transport, senior citizens, physically handicapped persons, children, ecology, environment and health.

In view of the larger public interest involved , we do hiope and expect that the above mentioned persons would sincerely attend the Committee as and when convened for an effective and satisfactory solution to the problems that are highlighted in this petition.

