

HC raps govt for tardy CWG land acquisition

Delayed Buying Land For Widening Road Before Games

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New Delhi: In the name of Commonwealth Games, the Delhi government in 2009 decided to acquire four b i s w a s of land in south Delhi. They planned to widen a highway and remove a perennial traffic bottleneck. While the acquisition was to be done on an urgent basis, the Government sat on the file for nearly two years. Now, the laggardly pace of work has come to haunt the Government with the Delhi High Court quashing the notification meant to take over the property.

A division bench of **Justice S Ravindra Bhat** *B.A. English Hons Hindu 1979 LLB Campus Law Centre 1982* and **Justice Najmi Waziri** *BA Philo Hons St Stephen's 1983 LLB Campus Law Centre 1983* castigated the government for its delay that resulted in the project remaining unfinished for over 20 months. "There is no gainsaying the fact that when traffic causes bottleneck on a main traffic artery, especially with the ever burgeoning traffic volume, the sense of urgency ought be of an immediate and an escalating degree with every passing day," **Justice Waziri** said while rebuking the authorities for the tardy work .

"Accountability ought to be fixed on such officers who let project files languish, which in turn delays the creation of adequate civic infrastructure, thus compounding the problems of the city and subjecting the citizens to unwarranted sufferings," the bench said.

The court learnt how the acquisition was requisitioned in February 2009 in great hurry, but even then the authorities took about twenty months to issue the Section 4 notification to start the process. "This, by no stretch of imagination, can be said to demonstrate any urgency," HC said noticing that the next stage of the acquisition arrived as late as 4th August, 2011. It again claimed "public purpose" i.e. modification and improvement of the T-junction of Anuvrat Marg and Aurobindo Marg.

The court said "slothful" approach of the government is against the acute need in the National Capital Territory "bearing in mind its fast burgeoning population and traffic density and projected growth." However, HC left it open to the Administration to restart the process provided it first gives a chance to the owner to contest it.