

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

CIVIL ORIGINAL JURISDICTION

MISCELLANEOUS APPLICATION NO. 21 OF 2022

MISCELLANEOUS APPLICATION NO. 665 OF 2021

IN

SUO MOTU WRIT PETITION C NO. 3 OF 2020

IN RE: COGNIZANCE FOR EXTENSION OF LIMITATION

WITH

MISCELLANEOUS APPLICATION NO.29 OF 2022

IN

MISCELLANEOUS APPLICATION NO. 665 OF 2021

IN

SUO MOTU WRIT PETITION C NO. 3 OF 2020

Order

1. In March, 2020, this Court took Suo Motu cognizance of the difficulties that might be faced by the litigants in filing petitions/ applications/ suits/ appeals/ all other quasi proceedings within the period of limitation prescribed under the general law of Vishal Digits G) 20 by limitation or under any special laws (both Central and/or State) due to the outbreak of the COVID- 19

pandemic. On 23.03.2020, this Court directed extension of the period of limitation in all proceedings before Courts/Tribunals including this Court w.e.f. 15.03.2020 till further orders. On 08.03.2021, the order dated 23.03.2020 was brought to an end, permitting the relaxation of period of limitation between 15.03.2020 and 14.03.2021. While doing so, it was made clear that the period of limitation would start from 15.03.2021.

3. Thereafter, due to a second surge in COVID-19 cases, the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association (SCAORA) intervened in the Suo Motu proceedings by filing Miscellaneous Application No. 665 of 2021 seeking restoration of the order dated 23.03.2020 relaxing limitation. The aforesaid Miscellaneous Application No.665 of 2021 was disposed of by this Court vide Order dated 23.09.2021, wherein this Court extended the period of limitation in all proceedings before the Courts/Tribunals including this Court w.e.f 15.03.2020 till 02.10.2021.

4. The present Miscellaneous Application has been filed by the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association in the context of the spread of the new variant of the COVID-19 and the drastic

surge in the number of COVID cases across the country. Considering the prevailing conditions, the applicants are seeking the following:

i. allow the present application by restoring the order dated 23.03.2020 passed by this Hon'ble Court in Sua Motu Writ Petition (C) NO. 3 of 2020 ; and ii.allow the present application by restoring the order dated 27.04.2021 passed by this Hon'ble Court in M.A. no. 665 of 2021 in Sua Motu Writ Petition (C) NO. 3 of 2020; and iii. pass such other order or orders as this Hon'ble Court may deem fit and proper.

5. Taking into consideration the arguments advanced by learned counsel and the impact of the surge of the virus on public health and adversities faced by litigants in the prevailing conditions, we deem it appropriate to dispose of the M.A. No. 21 of 2022 with the following directions:

1. The order dated 23.03.2020 is restored and in continuation of the subsequent orders dated 08.03.2021, 27.04.2021 and 23.09.2021, it is directed that the period from 15.03.2020 till 28.02.2022 shall stand excluded for the purposes of limitation as may be prescribed under any general or special laws in respect of all judicial or quasijudicial proceedings.11. Consequently, the balance period of limitation remaining as on 03.10.2021, if any, shall become available with effect from 01.03.2022.

111. In cases where the limitation would have expired during the period between 15.03.2020 till 28.02.2022, notwithstanding the actual balance period of limitation remaining, all persons shall have a

limitation period of 90 days from 01.03.2022. In the event the actual balance period of limitation remaining, with effect from 01.03.2022 is greater than 90 days, that longer period shall apply.

IV. It is further clarified that the period from 15.03.2020 till

28.02.2022 shall also stand excluded in computing the periods prescribed under Sections 23 (4) and 29A of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, Section 12A of the Commercial Courts Act, 2015 and provisos (b) and (c) of Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 and any other laws, which prescribe period(s) of limitation for instituting proceedings, outer limits (within which the court or tribunal can condone delay) and termination of proceedings.

As prayed for by learned Senior Counsel, M.A. No. 29 of 2022 is dismissed as withdrawn.

.....CJI.

(N.v. RAMANA)

.....J.

(L. NAGESWARA RAO)

.....J.

(SURYAKANT)

New Delhi

January 10, 2022