Directions issued for the expeditious disposal of cases by the Land Tribunal, utmost priority to be given to the cases filed by senior citizens: The High Court of Kerela

If it is felt that there is delay in obtaining reports through the Revenue Inspectors on account of their shortage, the Land Tribunal is free to get the reports from the Village Officers concerned. It is the discretion of the Land Tribunal in what manner such reports should be obtained. The aforesaid has been established by the Kerela High Court in the case of **Abdul Salam v. The Special Tahsildar (Lr), Land Tribunal [WP(C) NO. 12523 OF 2021]** which was decided by a single judge bench comprising *Justice Raja Vijayaraghavan V* on 22nd June 2021.

The facts of the case are as follows. The petitioner stated that he is in possession of 06.47 Ares of land in Malappuram District. By producing a copy of the land tax receipt issued by the respondent to the petitioner it was contended that a suo moto proceeding had been initiated by the Land Tribunal, Tirur under Rule 5 of the Kerala Land Reforms (Vesting and Assignment) Rules, 1970, for assignment of the right, title and interest of the landlord vested in the Government under Section 72 of the Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1963 and for issuance of a certificate of purchase under Section 72K of the said Act, read with Rule 14 of the said Rules. The petitioner was aggrieved by the delay in conclusion of the proceedings and his solitary prayer was for directions to the Tribunal to expedite the same.

The court conducted a perusal of the facts and arguments and gave a verdict which extensively followed the footsteps laid down by this court in the judgment of *Narayanan Namboodiri* v. *The Special Tahsildar (Land Reforms) and another* [Judgment dated 14.03.2018 in W.P.(C) No.28398 of 2017]. The exact directions issued by the court are as follows. *“(i) If it is felt that there is delay in obtaining reports through the Revenue Inspectors on account of their shortage, the Land Tribunal is free to get the reports from the Village Officers concerned. It is the discretion of the Land Tribunal in what manner such reports should be obtained. (ii) Utmost importance should be given for expeditious disposal of all the cases filed by the senior citizens. The Land Tribunal shall dispose such cases of senior citizens on seniority basis within six months. (iii) In respect of all other cases, the Land Tribunal shall follow the seniority of such cases and dispose the same within the maximum outer limit of 18 months unless there is a stay passed by the higher authorities. The Land Tribunal shall not break the seniority of such cases except for any directions being issued by this Court or any higher authority. (iv) The parties are given liberty to take out notice to the landowners in such a manner in which the Land Tribunal deems fit to do so, including publications.”*