



2026:AHC:193257

HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD
MATTERS UNDER ARTICLE 227 No. - 6369 of 2026

Km. Mona Shukla and 4 others

.....Petitioner(s)

Versus

Gyanendra Katiyar

.....Respondent(s)

Counsel for Petitioner(s)	: Anil Kumar
Counsel for Respondent(s)	: Shyam Narayan Verma, U.s. Verma

AFR

Court No. - 35

HON'BLE DR. YOGENDRA KUMAR SRIVASTAVA, J.

1. Heard Sri Anil Kumar, learned counsel for the petitioners and Sri Shyam Narayan Verma, learned counsel appearing for the respondents.
2. The present petition under Article 227 of the Constitution of India has been filed by the petitioners-plaintiffs assailing the order dated 02.04.2026 passed by the learned Additional District Judge, Court No. 18, Kanpur Nagar in S.C.C. Civil Suit No. 46 of 2019 (Mona v. Gyanendra), whereby Application Paper No. 158-C filed by the petitioners under Order VII Rule 14(3) read with Section 151 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (hereinafter referred to as the "CPC"), seeking permission to bring certain documents on record, has been rejected.

3. The aforesaid suit was instituted by the petitioners-plaintiffs seeking eviction of the respondents-defendants from the disputed premises for recovery of rent and damages. The suit was initially instituted as a civil suit and was subsequently proceeded with as a suit before the Small Causes Court. During the pendency of the proceedings, the plaint was amended pursuant to the order dated 21.08.2023, whereby paragraphs 2-A and 4-A were incorporated therein. In the amended plaint, the petitioners asserted, inter *alia*, that the disputed construction had been raised after 26.04.1985 and, consequently, the provisions of the U.P. Urban Buildings (Regulation of Letting, Rent and Eviction) Act, 1972 were not applicable to the premises in question.

4. The evidence of the petitioners-plaintiffs was concluded on 03.07.2025, whereas the evidence of the respondents-defendants was concluded on 20.01.2026. Thereafter, the suit was fixed for arguments. The case of the petitioners is that, during the pendency of the proceedings, they had made efforts to obtain from the Municipal Corporation, Kanpur, the first tax assessment relating to the disputed premises. According to the petitioners, the said document was ultimately obtained on 13.02.2026 pursuant to a complaint made by them through the Government portal.

5. Thereafter, the petitioners moved Application Paper No. 158-C seeking permission to bring on record, principally, the first tax assessment document issued by the Municipal Corporation, Kanpur, along with a copy of the complaint made for obtaining the same and a copy of the sanctioned plan. The petitioners pleaded that the first assessment document was material for establishing the date of construction of the disputed premises and, consequently, for determining the applicability of U.P. Act No. 13 of 1972. It was further pleaded that the document could not have been produced earlier as it was not available with the petitioners and had been obtained only on 13.02.2026.

6. The application was opposed by the respondents. It was contended that the application had been filed after conclusion of the evidence and at the stage of arguments only with a view to delay the disposal of the suit.

It was further contended that some of the documents sought to be brought on record, including the map, were already available on the record, whereas the other documents were photocopies and were not admissible in evidence. The respondents also relied upon the fact that the evidence of both sides had already concluded and that the suit had reached the stage of final arguments.

7. It was also brought to the notice of the learned court below that directions had been issued by the High Court for expeditious disposal of the suit. In S.C.C. Revision No. 84 of 2025, by order dated 01.08.2025, the Court directed that S.C.C. Suit No. 46 of 2019 be decided within three months from the date of production of a certified copy of the said order. Earlier, by order dated 02.05.2024 passed in Article 227 Petition No. 5500 of 2024, the Court had also directed expeditious disposal of the suit within the period stipulated therein.

8. While considering the application, the learned court below noticed that the proceedings had been pending for arguments since 05.02.2026. It recorded that the plaintiffs were absent on 05.02.2026 and had sought adjournments on 09.02.2026 and 16.02.2026, whereafter the application for production of the additional documents was filed on 21.02.2026. The court further noticed that the suit had been instituted on 20.01.2014, the plaint had subsequently been amended in the year 2023, and the evidence of both parties had already been completed.

9. The learned court below thereafter considered the scope of Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC, which requires leave of the Court for production at the stage of hearing of a document which ought to have been produced or entered in the list of documents accompanying the plaint but was not so produced or entered. In the facts of the case, the court found that the documents were sought to be introduced several years after institution of the suit and after completion of the evidence of both sides, when the matter had already reached the stage of arguments. As regards the map, it was specifically noticed that the same was already on the record and, therefore, its fresh production was considered unnecessary.

10. The learned court below further held that the explanation furnished by the petitioners for the delayed production of the documents was only of a superficial nature and did not constitute sufficient justification for exercise of discretion under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC. Having regard to the stage of the proceedings, the completion of evidence, the pendency of the suit for final arguments and the time-bound directions issued by this Court for its disposal, the court was of the view that permitting the documents to be introduced at that stage would further delay the proceedings without sufficient cause having been shown.

11. Aggrieved by the aforesaid order, the present petition has been filed.

12. Learned counsel for the petitioners submits that the impugned order proceeds on an erroneous premise that, merely because the evidence of the parties had concluded and the matter had reached the stage of arguments, the application under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC was liable to be rejected. It is contended that the provision itself contemplates production of a document at a subsequent stage with the leave of the Court and, therefore, the mere fact that the application was moved after conclusion of the evidence could not, by itself, constitute an absolute bar to its consideration.

13. Learned counsel submits that the principal document sought to be brought on record is directly relevant to an issue already arising in the suit, namely, the date of construction of the disputed premises and the consequent applicability of U.P. Act No. 13 of 1972. It is contended that the petitioners are neither seeking to introduce a new plea nor to alter the nature or foundation of the suit. The fact which the document is intended to establish had already been pleaded in the plaint, including in paragraphs 2-A and 4-A incorporated by way of amendment pursuant to the order dated 21.08.2023.

14. It is further submitted that the first assessment document was not in the possession of the petitioners at the earlier stage and was obtained from the Municipal Corporation, Kanpur only on 13.02.2026, pursuant

to the complaint made by them for securing the same. According to learned counsel, the delay in producing the document was neither deliberate nor intended to protract the proceedings. The petitioners, it is submitted, could not have produced a document which was not available to them earlier.

15. Learned counsel further submits that the document has a material bearing upon the adjudication of the suit, since, if the disputed premises were constructed after 26.04.1985, the applicability of U.P. Act No. 13 of 1972 itself would be affected. It is, therefore, contended that refusal to receive the document merely on account of the stage at which it was produced would deprive the Court of relevant material having a direct bearing upon the determination of the controversy between the parties.

16. It is also submitted that no irreparable prejudice would be caused to the respondents if the document is taken on record. The respondents, according to learned counsel, can be afforded an adequate opportunity to contest its genuineness, admissibility and evidentiary value in accordance with law and to avail such consequential opportunity as may be considered necessary. The petitioners, therefore, contend that the application ought not to have been rejected on the ground of delay alone when the document was relevant to an existing plea and the prejudice, if any, could be adequately safeguarded by appropriate directions.

17. Learned counsel lastly submits that the impugned order has placed substantial reliance upon the time-bound directions issued by this Court for disposal of the suit and upon the fact that the proceedings had reached the stage of arguments. According to learned counsel, the requirement of expeditious disposal could not, by itself, justify denial of an opportunity to place relevant material before the Court, particularly when the principal document had been obtained only subsequently and related to a fact already forming part of the pleadings.

18. On these grounds, learned counsel for the petitioners submits that the impugned order suffers from material irregularity in the exercise of jurisdiction and warrants interference by this Court in exercise of its supervisory jurisdiction under Article 227 of the Constitution of India.

19. Learned counsel appearing for the respondents, on the other hand, supports the impugned order and submits that no jurisdictional error has been committed by the learned court below in refusing permission to the petitioners to introduce additional documents at the stage of final arguments.

20. Learned counsel submits that the petitioners had already been afforded full opportunity to plead and prove their case. The plaint was amended in the year 2023, whereafter the petitioners led their evidence, which stood concluded on 03.07.2025. The respondents thereafter completed their evidence on 20.01.2026. The application in question was consequently filed only after the suit had reached the stage of arguments and after the petitioners had already availed their opportunity to lead evidence.

21. It is contended that the petitioners have failed to furnish any satisfactory or convincing explanation for not producing the documents at the appropriate stage. The mere assertion that a document was subsequently obtained, according to learned counsel, does not by itself entitle the petitioners to introduce it after conclusion of the entire evidence, particularly when the suit has remained pending for several years.

22. Learned counsel further submits that some of the documents sought to be produced were already available on the record and, therefore, their subsequent production was wholly unnecessary. In respect of the remaining documents, it is submitted that they are photocopies and that their admissibility and evidentiary value are themselves doubtful. The application, according to learned counsel, was thus not a *bona fide* attempt to bring genuinely unavailable material on record, but an attempt to reopen the evidentiary stage of the proceedings after the parties had completed their evidence.

23. It is further submitted that the suit has been pending since the year 2014 and that this Court has repeatedly issued directions for its expeditious disposal. Despite the matter having reached the stage of final arguments, the petitioners sought to introduce additional documents

which, if received, would necessarily require the respondents to meet the new material and would result in further delay in conclusion of the suit.

24. Learned counsel, therefore, submits that the discretion vested in the court under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC was rightly exercised after taking into consideration the stage of the proceedings, the explanation furnished by the petitioners, the fact that some of the documents were already available on the record, and the directions issued by this Court for expeditious disposal of the suit. The impugned order, according to learned counsel, calls for no interference in exercise of the supervisory jurisdiction of this Court under Article 227 of the Constitution of India.

25. Having considered the submissions advanced by learned counsel for the parties and perused the material brought on record, the principal question arising for consideration in the present petition is whether the learned court below was justified in declining permission under Order VII Rule 14(3) read with Section 151 CPC principally on the ground that the evidence of both parties had already been concluded and the suit had reached the stage of arguments, notwithstanding the petitioners' assertion that the principal document sought to be produced had been obtained subsequently from the Municipal Corporation and was intended to substantiate a fact already forming part of the pleadings.

26. The scope of the discretion available to a Court under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC has recently been considered by this Court in **Mohammad Arif v. Laiq Ahmad**¹, wherein the question of production of documents at the stage of final arguments was considered. This Court held that the requirement of obtaining leave under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC does not constitute an absolute prohibition against the subsequent production of a document. The provision itself contemplates that a document may, with the leave of the Court, be received at a subsequent stage. The discretion so conferred, therefore, has to be exercised judicially, upon consideration of the circumstances which occasioned the delayed production, the relevance of the document and the prejudice, if any, likely to be caused to the opposite party.

1 2026 SCC OnLine All 263

27. In **Mohammad Arif**, this Court, after considering the object of Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC and the principles governing procedural law, identified the following three-fold considerations for exercise of the discretion under the said provision:

“15. The discretion under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC is required to be exercised judiciously by applying a three fold test: (i) whether the omission to file the document earlier was *bona fide*; (ii) whether the document is relevant and necessary for effective adjudication of the dispute; and (iii) whether permitting its production at a later stage would occasion serious prejudice or irreparable injustice to the defendant.”

28. The aforesaid approach is consistent with the broader principle that procedural provisions are intended to facilitate the adjudication of disputes on their merits and not, ordinarily, to defeat substantive justice on account of a procedural lapse. In **Mohammad Arif**, this Court, while referring to the decisions of the Supreme Court in **Sangram Singh v. Election Tribunal, Kotah**² and **State of Punjab v. Shamlal Murari**³, reiterated that procedural law is a means to advance the cause of justice and is required to be applied in a manner consistent with fairness and the principles of natural justice.

29. This, however, does not mean that a party acquires an unrestricted right to produce documents at any stage merely by asserting that they are relevant. The discretion under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC is neither automatic nor mechanical. The Court is required to examine the explanation furnished for the earlier non-production, the nature and relevance of the document, the stage at which its production is sought, and the nature and extent of prejudice which its reception may cause to the opposite party. The fact that the proceedings have reached the stage of final arguments is undoubtedly a significant consideration and calls for greater scrutiny of the request; but it cannot, by itself, convert the discretion expressly conferred by Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC into an absolute prohibition against receiving the document.

2 (1955) 1 SCC 323

3 (1976) 1 SCC 719

30. The exercise of discretion under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC may, in the circumstances of a particular case, be guided by the following considerations:

(i) Whether the document was within the possession or knowledge of the party when it ought to have been disclosed. If it was available but was withheld without satisfactory explanation, the application would ordinarily warrant greater scrutiny.

(ii) Where the document was not earlier available or could not, despite due diligence, reasonably have been obtained, its subsequent availability is a relevant circumstance. The explanation for the delay must, however, be assessed in the context of the facts of the case and not accepted on a bare assertion.

(iii) Whether the document is relevant and has a material bearing on an issue arising for adjudication. A document supporting an existing plea stands on a different footing from one seeking to introduce a new factual foundation or alter the nature of the case.

(iv) The stage of the proceedings is a relevant consideration. An application made after commencement of evidence, particularly after conclusion of the applicant's evidence or at the stage of final arguments, requires closer scrutiny. The mere fact that the proceedings have reached the stage of final arguments, however, does not by itself bar the exercise of discretion under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC.

(v) The nature and extent of prejudice likely to be caused to the opposite party. Mere inconvenience or the necessity of dealing with an additional document would not, by itself, justify its exclusion. The Court should consider whether such prejudice can be adequately addressed by permitting inspection, objections as to genuineness or admissibility, further cross-examination, consequential evidence or appropriate submissions, as the circumstances may require.

(vi) Reception of a document on record is distinct from its proof, admissibility, genuineness and evidentiary value. At this stage, the inquiry should ordinarily remain confined to whether sufficient cause

has been shown for its reception and whether the document is relevant to the controversy. Its ultimate admissibility, proof, authenticity and evidentiary value are matters for determination at the appropriate stage in accordance with law.

(vii) Where multiple documents are sought to be produced, each document must be considered separately with reference to its relevance, necessity and circumstances of production. The status of one document cannot, by itself, determine the fate of another distinct document.

(viii) Where leave is granted, the Court may impose appropriate safeguards to prevent prejudice and ensure expeditious disposal, including costs, a limited opportunity for consequential evidence, recall of a witness where necessary, or a time-bound schedule for completion of consequential proceedings.

31. The aforesaid considerations are illustrative and are neither exhaustive nor to be applied as a rigid formula in every case. The discretion under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC must ultimately be exercised having regard to the facts and circumstances of the particular case. The Court is required to strike an appropriate balance between procedural discipline and the requirement of a fair and effective adjudication. Where a document is shown to have been genuinely unavailable at the earlier stage, is materially relevant to an issue already arising in the suit, and the prejudice likely to be caused to the opposite party can adequately be addressed by appropriate procedural safeguards, the mere belatedness of the application should not, by itself, result in exclusion of the document. Conversely, where the document was available but was withheld without sufficient explanation, or its belated production would cause prejudice incapable of being effectively remedied, the Court would be justified in adopting a stricter approach.

32. Applying the aforesaid principles to the facts of the present case, the first question is whether the petitioners have furnished a *bona fide* explanation for the delayed production of the principal document. The first tax assessment relating to the disputed premises is stated to have

been obtained from the Municipal Corporation, Kanpur only on 13.02.2026, pursuant to the complaint made by the petitioners for securing the same. There is nothing on record to indicate that the said document was available to the petitioners at the earlier stage and was deliberately withheld until the matter reached the stage of arguments. While subsequent availability of a document does not, by itself, establish *bona fides*, it is a circumstance which cannot be ignored where there is no material to suggest that the document was within the petitioners' possession or was reasonably available to them at the earlier stage. The subsequent availability of the document, in these circumstances, is therefore a material circumstance while examining the explanation furnished by the petitioners.

33. There is another significant circumstance which requires consideration. The document is not sought to be introduced in support of a plea newly set up at the stage of arguments. The petitioners' case regarding the date of construction of the disputed premises had already found place in the plaint and, in particular, in paragraphs 2-A and 4-A incorporated by amendment pursuant to the order dated 21.08.2023. The subsequent document is thus sought to be produced as evidentiary material in support of an existing plea and not as the foundation of a new case.

34. The relevance of the document also cannot be seriously disputed. The petitioners seek to rely upon the first assessment document as material bearing upon the date from which the disputed premises came to be assessed and, consequently, upon the period in which the construction of the premises came to exist, in support of their case that the construction was raised after 26.04.1985. This is not to suggest that the date of assessment, by itself, conclusively determines the date of construction. Its probative significance, and the extent to which it supports the pleaded case, are matters to be examined by the learned court below on the evidence. The date of construction has a direct bearing upon the applicability of the U.P. Urban Buildings (Regulation

of Letting, Rent and Eviction) Act, 1972. The document is, therefore, not extraneous to the controversy pending before the learned court below.

35. Whether the document ultimately establishes or fails to establish the petitioners' case is a matter concerning its evidentiary value and the merits of the dispute. While considering an application under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC, the Court is principally concerned with whether the document is relevant to an issue arising for adjudication and whether sufficient cause exists for its belated production. The Court is not, at that stage, called upon to finally adjudicate whether the fact which the document is intended to support is true. The weight to be attached to the document, its admissibility in accordance with law, its genuineness and the inference, if any, to be drawn from it are matters which remain to be determined at the appropriate stage in accordance with law.

36. The further consideration relates to prejudice to the respondents. The respondents have undoubtedly acquired a legitimate procedural expectation, upon completion of the evidence, that the matter would thereafter proceed to final arguments. This circumstance cannot be disregarded. At the same time, prejudice in the legal sense is not established merely because an additional document is permitted to be brought on record after completion of evidence. The relevant question is whether reception of the document would deprive the respondents of a fair and effective opportunity to meet the material sought to be introduced. The mere fact that the respondents may have to undertake some additional procedural exercise cannot, in itself, be equated with legal prejudice, if such exercise can reasonably be accommodated without compromising their right to a fair opportunity to contest the document.

37. In this regard, the approach adopted by this Court in **Mohammad Arif** (*supra*) assumes significance. There also, documents were permitted to be brought on record at the stage of final arguments. This Court upheld the exercise of discretion by the Trial Court, inter alia, because adequate safeguards had been provided to the opposite party, including liberty to recall witnesses for further cross-examination. The underlying

principle was that the opportunity afforded to the opposite party must be real and meaningful and not merely illusory.

38. The same principle would apply in the present case. If the document is permitted to be taken on record, the respondents can be adequately safeguarded by granting them an opportunity to meet the document, including, where necessary, an opportunity to contest its admissibility, genuineness and evidentiary effect and to seek consequential cross-examination or rebuttal evidence in accordance with law. Such safeguards would sufficiently balance the petitioners' right to place relevant material before the Court with the respondents' right to a fair opportunity to contest the same.

39. The reliance placed by the learned court below upon the fact that this Court had directed expeditious disposal of the suit also requires consideration. The directions for expeditious disposal are undoubtedly binding, and proceedings which have remained pending for a considerable period cannot be permitted to be unnecessarily protracted. However, a direction for expeditious disposal does not dispense with the requirement of a fair adjudication. Expedition and procedural fairness are required to be harmonised rather than treated as mutually exclusive considerations.

40. In the present case, the learned court below has principally rejected the application on the ground that the evidence had already been concluded and the matter was fixed for arguments. While the stage of the proceedings was undoubtedly a relevant consideration, it could not, by itself, conclude the inquiry under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC. The mere advancement of the proceedings to the stage of final arguments does not, by itself, render the discretion conferred by Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC unavailable in respect of a document which otherwise satisfies the requirements governing the exercise of such discretion. The learned court below was required to examine whether the explanation for non-production was *bona fide*, whether the document was relevant and necessary for effective adjudication, and whether any prejudice to the respondents could be adequately addressed by appropriate safeguards.

These aspects assume particular significance where, as in the present case, the principal document is stated to have been obtained subsequently from a public authority and is sought to be relied upon in support of a plea already forming part of the pleadings. The approach adopted by the learned court below, insofar as it treated the closure of evidence and commencement of arguments as determinative of the application without undertaking the aforesaid assessment, therefore, did not accord with the nature of the discretion contemplated by Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC.

41. The circumstance that some of the documents sought to be produced may already be available on the record stands on a different footing. To the extent any document is already part of the record, there would obviously be no occasion to permit its production afresh. The same, however, cannot furnish a ground for rejecting the application in its entirety if the principal document sought to be produced was not earlier available to the petitioners and is otherwise relevant to the controversy. Each document has to be considered on its own footing, having regard to its status, relevance and the circumstances in which its production is sought. The fact that one document is already on record or may suffer from an evidentiary infirmity cannot, by itself, determine the fate of another document which was not earlier available and which otherwise satisfies the requirements for its production.

42. Equally, the objection that the documents are photocopies or that their admissibility is liable to be examined cannot, at this stage, by itself furnish a complete answer to the prayer for their reception, particularly when the petitioners seek to place the material before the Court in support of a fact already pleaded. The question of admissibility, genuineness and evidentiary value of the documents can be considered in accordance with law at the appropriate stage. What is material for present purposes is whether the petitioners have made out a case for permission to produce the documents and whether the respondents can be adequately protected against prejudice.

43. The position is no different insofar as reliance has been placed upon Section 151 CPC. It does not enlarge the discretion expressly conferred by Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC, nor can the inherent power be invoked to circumvent an express provision of the Code. As explained by the Supreme Court in **Padam Sen v. State of Uttar Pradesh**⁴, the inherent power is complementary to the powers expressly conferred by the Code and may be exercised to secure the ends of justice, subject to the limitation that its exercise is not inconsistent with any express provision of law. It cannot, therefore, be employed either to enlarge the scope of Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC or to dispense with the conditions governing the exercise of discretion under that provision. In the present case, Section 151 CPC can operate only in aid of the discretion under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC and for issuing such consequential directions as may be necessary to protect the respondents against prejudice.

44. On a cumulative consideration of the aforesaid factors, this Court is of the view that the petitioners have furnished a *bona fide* explanation for the delayed production of the principal document; the document bears directly upon an issue already arising in the suit and does not introduce a new factual foundation; and the respondents can be adequately protected against any prejudice by granting them a reasonable opportunity to respond and contest the document and, where necessary, to avail consequential procedural remedies. The fact that the suit had reached the stage of final arguments and was subject to directions for expeditious disposal, though relevant, could not by itself outweigh these considerations. The learned court below, therefore, was required to exercise its discretion under Order VII Rule 14(3) CPC upon a consideration of the aforesaid circumstances and by balancing procedural discipline with the requirement of a fair and effective adjudication. Its failure to undertake such an assessment and its treatment of the stage of the proceedings as the principal consideration, without adequately examining the other relevant factors, resulted in an erroneous exercise of the discretion vested in it.

4 (1961) 1 SCR 884

45. It is made clear that the consideration of the application is confined to the question of reception of the documents on record. This Court has expressed no opinion on the authenticity, admissibility or evidentiary value of the assessment document, nor does the reception of any document on record amount to any finding regarding the actual date of construction of the disputed premises or the applicability of the U.P. Act No. 13 of 1972. All such questions shall remain open for determination by the learned court below in accordance with law.

46. The impugned order dated 02.04.2026 passed by the learned Additional District Judge, Court No. 18, Kanpur Nagar in S.C.C. Civil Suit No. 46 of 2019 is set aside. Application Paper No. 158-C filed by the petitioners under Order VII Rule 14(3) read with Section 151 CPC is allowed to the aforesaid extent. The documents sought to be produced under Application Paper No. 158-C which were not earlier available to the petitioners shall be taken on record, subject to proof and admissibility in accordance with law. To the extent any document sought to be produced under the application is already available on the record, no fresh production thereof shall be necessary.

47. Before proceeding to decide the suit, the learned court below shall afford the respondents a reasonable opportunity to inspect and respond to the documents so brought on record and, if necessary and permissible in law, to seek recall of the concerned witness(es) for further cross-examination or to adduce consequential evidence. Any such request shall be considered by the learned court below having regard to the nature and relevance of the particular document and shall not be construed as conferring an unrestricted right to reopen the evidentiary proceedings. The learned court below shall regulate any such consequential proceedings in a time-bound manner, so as to avoid unnecessary delay and confine them to what may be necessary to afford a fair opportunity to the respondents.

48. The learned court below shall thereafter proceed to decide the suit expeditiously, keeping in view the earlier directions issued by this Court for its disposal. The petition stands allowed to the aforesaid extent.

49. There shall be no order as to costs.

(Dr. Yogendra Kumar Srivastava,J.)

September 15, 2026

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