



**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

**CRM-M-15688-2025
DECIDED ON: 23.04.2025**

**MANINDERJIT SINGH @ MANINDERJEET SINGH
@ MANNU**

.....PETITIONER

VERSUS

STATE OF PUNJAB

.....RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL

Present: None.

SANDEEP MOUDGIL, J (ORAL)

1. The Punjab & Haryana High Court Bar Association and Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana High Court have decided “No work day” for today i.e., 23.04.2025 on account of sudden demise of Sh. Bhupinder Singh Rathore, oldest member of the Bar Council.

2. The jurisdiction of this Court has been invoked under Section 483 Of The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 for grant of regular bail to the petitioner in case FIR No. 40 Dated 07.04. 2024, (Annexure P-1) under Sections 22, 61, 85 of NDPS Act, 1985 (offence under Sections 25 and 29 NDPS Act have been added later on) registered at P.S. Anandpur Sahib, District Rupnagar.

3. Prosecution story setup in the present case as per the version in the FIR as under:-

“Copy of ruga, Jai Hind, Today, I, ASI alongwith ASI Raj Kumar 901/R, C. Sandeep Kumar 582/R, P.H.G. Parmod Kumar through a Government vehicle No.PB-65BF-2068,

whose driver C.Raj Kumar 192/R, in connection with patrolling and checking of suspicious persons, while doing towards the Bhakra Canal Patri Ganguwal to Bikarpur side, while conducting the nakabandi and started checking of the vehicles, near the gate of Patri, then the time would be about 7.10 pm. During checking a car bearing NO.PB-12-s-0301, colour white came from Bikarpur side, then they tried to turn back the car after seeing the police party, due to no space to turn the car, then I ASI with the help - of fellow officials, apprehended the four persons from the car and enquired their names and address. The driver of the car disclosed his name as Maninderjit Singh alias Manu son of Dalbir Singh resident of Power Colony, H.No.03 Type-II, Sri Anandpur Sahib, the person who was sitting on the conductor seat of the car disclosed his name as Kirandeep alias Kinnu son of Sukhwinder Singh, resident of Village Mangewal, the boy who was sitting on the rear seat, disclosed his name as Davinder Singh son of Gurdeep Singh, resident of Shampura, New Colony, Rupnagar and more person sitting on the rear seat tried to escape after opening the door of the car, who fall on the road while he was running, he was apprehended while fell. down, he was got injury on his head, he disclosed his name as Jaswinder Singh alias Jass son of Surinder Singh, resident of Village Dher. Then I, ASI checked the above said car, and on checking, a polythene lying near the lever of the car was found, it seems containing some intoxicant powder inside. On enquiry from the said person, but they failed to give any satisfactory reply. Upon which, Maninderjit Singh alias Monu, Kirandeep Singh alias Kinnu, Davinder Singh and Jaswinder Singh alias Jass above said, by keeping intoxicant powder in inside car, have committed offence under Section 22/61/85 NDPS Act, so the ruga is being sent for registration of FIR under Section 22/61/85 NDPS Act against the above said persons, through HC Sandeep Kumar 582/R to the police Station. In this regard, information was given on telephone to the SHO of the police Station to send the competent officer to reach on the spot. After registration of

FIR, case number be intimated. Information should be given to higher officer and control room Rupnagar through wireless.”

4. It has been pleaded in the petition that as per the prosecution story, total 255 grams of intoxicant powder containing Psychotropic Substance ‘Tramadol Hydrochloride’ and ‘DiacetyImorphine’ was recovered from the dash board of the alleged vehicle, which was being driven by the present petitioner and the said alleged contraband is marginally over and above the commercial quantity.

5. As per the custody certificate produced in Court by the Pervi Officer, the petitioner has suffered incarceration for a period of 01 year and 12 days and the petitioner is involved in two other case.

6. Be that as it may, considering the custody period undergone by the petitioner i.e. 01 year and 12 days added with the facts that the quantity of alleged contraband is marginally over and above the commercial quantity; investigation is complete, wherein after framing of charges on 28.10.2024 out of total 19 prosecution witnesses, 04 witnesses have been examined and 05 witnesses have been given up, which is suffice for this Court to infer that the conclusion of trial shall take considerable time, this Court is of the considering view that detaining the petitioner behind the bars for an indefinite period would serve no purpose.

7. Taking into consideration the following orders passed by the Coordinate Benches of this Court wherein the recovery from the accused was marginally over and above the commercial quantity for the respective contraband in each case, the Courts have taken a lenient view while granting bail to the accused therein i.e. *Sukhchain Singh @ Manga Versus State of*

Punjab, CRM-M-7857-2022 decided on 04.04.2022, *Pardeep Singh versus State of Punjab, CRM-M-46244-2022* decided on 19.01.2023, *Hari Yadav @ Haiya versus State of Punjab (CRM-M-37645-2021)*' decided on 11.11.2022, '*Jang Kanwar Versus State of Punjab (CRM-M-53415-2021)*' decided on 19.01.2022, '*Shankar Prashad Chanau Versus The State of Punjab, CRM-M-24090-2020*, decided on 27.08.2020, *Gurpreet Kumar Versus State of Punjab, CRM-M-17021-2021*, decided on 31.08.2021, *Salim Versus State of Haryana, CRM-M-42436-2020, decided on 24.02.2021, Gagandeep Versus State of Punjab, CRM-M-3055-2021*, decided on 27.01.2021, *Gurpreet Gopi Versus State of Punjab, CRM-M-41039-2019, Singh* decided on 26.02.2020, *Dalbara Singh Versus State of Punjab, CRM-M-47880-2022 decided on 16.01.2023*', and *Vivek Watts versus State of Punjab, CRM-M-13791-2022* decided on 15.02.2023.

8. Reliance can be placed upon the judgment of the Apex Court rendered in “*Dataram versus State of Uttar Pradesh and another*”, 2018(2) *R.C.R. (Criminal) 131*, wherein it has been held that the grant of bail is a general rule and putting persons in jail or in prison or in correction home is an exception. Relevant paras of the said judgment is reproduced as under:-

“2. A fundamental postulate of criminal jurisprudence is the presumption of innocence, meaning thereby that a person is believed to be innocent until found guilty. However, there are instances in our criminal law where a reverse onus has been placed on an accused with regard to some specific offences but that is another matter and does not detract from the fundamental postulate in respect of other offences. Yet another important facet of our criminal jurisprudence is that the grant of bail is the general rule and putting a person in jail or in a prison or in a correction home (whichever expression one may wish to use) is an exception.

Unfortunately, some of these basic principles appear to have been lost sight of with the result that more and more persons are being incarcerated and for longer periods. This does not do any good to our criminal jurisprudence or to our society.

3. There is no doubt that the grant or denial of bail is entirely the discretion of the judge considering a case but even so, the exercise of judicial discretion has been circumscribed by a large number of decisions rendered by this Court and by every High Court in the country. Yet, occasionally there is a necessity to introspect whether denying bail to an accused person is the right thing to do on the facts and in the circumstances of a case.

4. While so introspecting, among the factors that need to be considered is whether the accused was arrested during investigations when that person perhaps has the best opportunity to tamper with the evidence or influence witnesses. If the investigating officer does not find it necessary to arrest an accused person during investigations, a strong case should be made out for placing that person in judicial custody after a charge sheet is filed. Similarly, it is important to ascertain whether the accused was participating in the investigations to the satisfaction of the investigating officer and was not absconding or not appearing when required by the investigating officer. Surely, if an accused is not hiding from the investigating officer or is hiding due to some genuine and expressed fear of being victimised, it would be a factor that a judge would need to consider in an appropriate case. It is also necessary for the judge to consider whether the accused is a first-time offender or has been accused of other offences and if so, the nature of such offences and his or her general conduct. The poverty or the deemed indigent status of an accused is also an extremely important factor and even Parliament has taken notice of it by incorporating an Explanation to section 436 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. An equally soft approach to incarceration has been taken by Parliament by inserting section 436A in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

5. *To put it shortly, a humane attitude is required to be adopted by a judge, while dealing with an application for remanding a suspect or an accused person to police custody or judicial custody. There are several reasons for this including maintaining the dignity of an accused person, howsoever poor that person might be, the requirements of Article 21 of the Constitution and the fact that there is enormous overcrowding in prisons, leading to social and other problems as noticed by this Court in In Re-Inhuman Conditions in 1382 Prisons, 2017(4) RCR (Criminal) 416: 2017(5) Recent Apex Judgments (R.A.J.) 408 : (2017) 10 SCC 658*

6. *The historical background of the provision for bail has been elaborately and lucidly explained in a recent decision delivered in Nikesh Tara chand Shah v. Union of India, 2017 (13) SCALE 609 going back to the days of the Magna Carta. In that decision, reference was made to Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v. State of Punjab, (1980) 2 SCC 565 in which it is observed that it was held way back in Nagendra v. King-Emperor, AIR 1924 Calcutta 476 that bail is not to be withheld as a punishment. Reference was also made to Emperor v. Hutchinson, AIR 1931 Allahabad 356 wherein it was observed that grant of bail is the rule and refusal is the exception. The provision for bail is therefore age-old and the liberal interpretation to the provision for bail is almost a century old, going back to colonial days.*

7. *However, we should not be understood to mean that bail should be granted in every case. The grant or refusal of bail is entirely within the discretion of the judge hearing the matter and though that discretion is unfettered, it must be exercised judiciously and in a humane manner and compassionately. Also, conditions for the grant of bail ought not to be so strict as to be incapable of compliance, thereby making the grant of bail illusory.”*

9. Therefore, to elucidate further, this Court is conscious of the basic and fundamental principle of law that right to speedy trial is a part of reasonable, fair and just procedure enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. This constitutional right cannot be denied to the accused as is the mandate of the Apex court in “*Hussainara Khatoon and ors (IV) v. Home Secretary, State of Bihar, Patna*”, (1980) 1 SCC 98.

Besides this, reference can be drawn upon that pre-conviction period of the under-trials should be as short as possible keeping in view the nature of accusation and the severity of punishment in case of conviction and the nature of supporting evidence, reasonable apprehension of tampering with the witness or apprehension of threat to the complainant.

10. As far as the pendency of other cases and involvement of the petitioner in other cases is concerned, reliance can be placed upon the order of this Court rendered in CRM-M-25914-2022 titled as “*Baljinder Singh alias Rock vs. State of Punjab*” decided on 02.03.2023, wherein, while referring Article 21 of the Constitution of India, this Court has held that no doubt, at the time of granting bail, the criminal antecedents of the petitioner are to be looked into but at the same time it is equally true that the appreciation of evidence during the course of trial has to be looked into with reference to the evidence in that case alone and not with respect to the evidence in the other pending cases. In such eventuality, strict adherence to the rule of denial of bail on account of pendency of other cases/convictions in all probability would land the petitioner in a situation of denial of concession of bail.

11. In view of the discussions made hereinabove, the petitioner is hereby directed to be released on regular bail on him furnishing bail and

surety bonds to the satisfaction of the trial Court/Duty Magistrate, concerned.

12. In the afore-said terms, the present petition is hereby allowed.

13. However, it is made clear that anything stated hereinabove shall not be construed as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case.

14. The Jail Authority concerned is directed to intimate the said order to the petitioner-accused.

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)
JUDGE

23.04.2025

Poonam Negi

Whether speaking/reasoned

Yes/No

Whether reportable

Yes/No