

2025:PHHC:067330



210

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

**CRM-M-24916-2025
DECIDED ON: 20.05.2025**

MANPREET SINGH

.....PETITIONER

VERSUS

STATE OF PUNJAB

.....RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL

Present: Ms. Amanpreet, Advocate for
Mr. Hanspuneet Singh Kehal, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. Rajiv Verma, Senior DAG Punjab

SANDEEP MOUDGIL, J (ORAL)

1. Prayer

This petition has been filed under Section 483 of BNSS, 2023 grant of regular bail in FIR No. 261 dated 06.12.2023 registered under Section 21 of NDPS Act, registered at Police Station Gharinda, District Amritstar (Annexure P-1).

2. Facts

Facts as narrated in the FIR reads as under:-

“SHO Police Station Gharinda, Jai Hind, today with ASI Mustak Masih 1281/ASR-R, S/CT Gurpreet singh 219/ASR-R, PHG Atma Singh 20345 alongwith laptop and a private vehicle were patrolling in search of bad elements from in the area of Police station Gharinda to village Lahorimal, Hoshiarnagar etc. While patrolling when police

party reached drain bridge of village lahorimal, one haircut boy carrying transparent polythene bag in his right hand started running towards drain upon seeing police party. When he tried to throw away that polythene bag, SI with the help of other police officials arrested him and asked him about his name and address. He told his name as Manpreet singh s/o Bikar singh resident of village Bhaini Rajpootan PS Gharinda. Before checking transparent polythene bag carried in his right hand, police party tried to join some independent witness in the search but every person left the place by telling their problems and no one joined the police party. SI in the presence of other officials, search open the polythene bag and heroine was recovered from the polythene. That with the help of weighing scale recovered heroine with polythene bag weighed 260 grams. Recovered heroine with polythene bag was put in a plastic box and parcel was prepared that was sealed with stamp D.S. and sample of stamp was separately prepared which was handed over to ASI Mustak Ahmed 1281/ASR-R for further use. Parcel of 260 grams heroine sealed with D.S. stamp was taken into possession vide separate memo by the police. On personal search of Manpreet singh, one mobile phone of Iphone company was also recovered and that also was taken into custody as a case property by the police vide search memo. Accused Manpreet singh has committed offence under section 21-61-85 NDPS Act by having 260 grams heroine in his possession. Because of chance recovery, no gazzetted officer or Magistrate was also not called on the spot and regarding this, separate report under section 57 NDPS Act is being sent to the officers. Hand written ruka is being sent to police station for registration of case under the hand of PHG Atma singh 20345.”

3. Contentions:

On behalf of the petitioner

At the outset, learned counsel for the petitioner submits that the petitioner is in custody since 08.12.2023, wherein after framing of charges on 07.08.2024 out of total 11 prosecution witnesses none has been examined so far,

meaning thereby the trial is moving at slow pace, therefore, no useful purpose would be served by keeping the petitioner behind bars.

On behalf of the State

On the other hand, learned State Counsel has filed the custody certificate of the petitioner, which is taken on record. According to which, the petitioner is behind bars for 1 year 5 months and 11 days.

Learned State Counsel on instructions from the Investigating Officer opposes the prayer for grant of regular bail stating that recovery of contraband i.e., 260 grams of heroin in the present is commercial in nature. Therefore, rigour of Section 37 of NDPS Act would be attracted in this case.

4. **Analysis**

Be that as it may, considering the custody period undergone by the petitioner i.e. 01 year 5 months and 11 days; antecedents of the petitioner are clean; quantity of alleged contraband i.e., 260 grams of heroin is marginally over and above the commercial quantity added with the fact that investigation is complete, wherein after framing of charges on 07.08.2024 out of total 11 prosecution witnesses, none has been examined, 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.

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.

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 Nimesh 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.”*

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 **“Balwinder Singh versus State of Punjab and Another”, SLP (Crl.) No.8523/2024.** Relevant paras of the said judgment reads as under:-

“7. An accused has a right to a fair trial and while a hurried trial is frowned upon as it may not give sufficient time to prepare for the defence, an inordinate delay in conclusion of the trial would infringe the right of an accused guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

8. *It is not for nothing the Author Oscar Wilde in “The Ballad of Reading Gaol”, wrote the following poignant lines while being incarcerated:*

*“I know not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who be in jail
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.”*

5. **Relief:**

In view of the discussions made hereinabove, the petitioner is hereby directed to be released on regular bail on furnishing bail and surety bonds to the satisfaction of the trial Court/Duty Magistrate, concerned.

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

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

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)
JUDGE

20.05.2025

Meenu

Whether speaking/reasoned *Yes/No*
Whether reportable *Yes/No*