

2025.PHHC:056611



234

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

**CRM-M-22036-2025 (O&M)
DECIDED ON: 01.05.2025**

LAKHVIR SINGH**.....PETITIONER****VERSUS****STATE OF PUNJAB****.....RESPONDENT****CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL**

Present: Mr. Chandan Singh Rana, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. Rajiv Verma, Senior DAG Punjab

SANDEEP MOUDGIL, J (ORAL)**1. Prayer**

This Third Petition under section 483 of BNSS, 2023 for grant of regular bail to the petitioner in case FIR No. 147 dated 03.10.2023 U/s 22, 61 of NDPS Act 1985 registered at P.S. Dakha, District Ludhiana.

2. Facts

Facts as narrated in the FIR reads as under:-

“Officer Incharge PS Dakha, Jai Hind. Today I, ASI alongwith ASI Paramjit Singh No. 684, HC Gurpreet Singh No. 07, Ct. Harminder Singh No. 701 by riding private vehicle was present at Main Chowk Mandi Mullanpur for area patrolling and checking of suspicious persons and in the meantime secret informer came and gave information to I, ASI that Lakhvir Singh son of Jagjit Singh son of Gian Singh resident of Pandori, PS Dakha, District Ludhiana is habitual of selling intoxicating tablets. Even now above mentioned Lakhvir Singh is sitting under Peepal Tree near Ground Dakha and is

waiting for customers to sell intoxicating tablets in large quantity. If raid is conducted on him near Ground Dakha immediately then above mentioned Lakhvir Singh can be apprehended alongwith intoxicating tablets in large quantity. This information is believed to be true. Above mentioned Lakhvir Singh by keeping intoxicating tablets in his possession has committed an offence punishable under sections 22,61/85 NDPS Act. Therefore, Ruqa is being sent to police station by the hand of Ct. Harminder Singh 701 for registration of FIR against above mentioned Lakhvir Singh under above mentioned sections. Number be intimated after registration of FIR. Special reports be issued. Competent Investigating Officer be sent at the spot for further investigation. Report U/s 42 NDPS Act is sent along for getting it marked as Seen from Circle Officer. I, ASI alongwith co-employees am departing. Today present in area of Main Chowk Mandi Mullanpur at 6:20 PM. Sd/- Atma Singh ASI PS Dakha Date 03.10.2023.'

3. Contentions:

On behalf of the petitioner

Learned counsel for the petitioner has argued that the petitioner has been falsely implicated in the present case. He further submits that the petitioner is in custody since 1 year, 6 months and 25 days, wherein investigation is complete, challan stands presented and nothing is to be recovered from him, who is in custody since 05.10.2023. He asserts that the petitioner is a person of clean antecedents, as he is not involved in any other case.

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 6 months and 25 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., 211 loose tablets in the present case is commercial in nature. Therefore, rigour of Section 37 of NDPS Act would be attracted in this case.

4. **Analysis**

Considering the facts that the petitioner has already suffered incarceration of 1 year, 6 months and 25 days and is a person of clean antecedents added with the fact that investigation is complete, challan stands presented on 12.12.2023, charges have been framed on 14.12.2023 and out of total 10 prosecution witnesses, only one has been examined so far. This Court is sanguine of the fact that conclusion of trial shall take considerable time, no useful purpose would be served by keeping the petitioner behind bars for uncertain period, wherein “*bail is a rule and jail is an exception*” and it would also violate the principle of right to speedy trial and expeditious disposal under Article 21 of Constitution of India, as has been time and again discussed by this Court, while relying upon the judgment of the Apex Court passed in ***Dataram Singh vs. State of Uttar Pradesh & Anr. 2018(2) R.C.R. (Criminal) 131***. 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.”

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

01.05.2025

Meenu

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