

Bau Singh vs State Of Punjab on 8 August, 2023

Author: Pankaj Jain

Bench: Pankaj Jain

Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102

215

2023:PHHC:102382

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-29923-2022

Date of decision : 08.08.2023

Bau Singh

....Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PANKAJ JAIN

Present : Mr. Karnail S. Ahhi, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. Amit Shukla, AAG, Punjab.

PANKAJ JAIN, J. (ORAL)

This petition has been filed under Section 439 Cr.P.C. for grant of regular bail to the petitioner in case F.I.R. No.144 dated 25.08.2021 registered for the offences punishable under Sections 21-c, 25 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (for short, 'the NDPS Act') at Police Station Special Task Force, District SAS Nagar.

2. Custody Certificate has been produced today in Court. The same is taken on record.

3. As per the case of prosecution it has been claimed that on receiving the secret information that the petitioner is indulging in smuggling of heroin, barricading was laid. The petitioner was apprehended while coming on motor-cycle. On his search 310 grams of heroin was seized from his conscious possession.

4. Counsel for the petitioner emphatically argues that it is a case 1 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 of false implication and in fact the petitioner was

apprehended and arrested from a shop working under the name of Ashoka Tyres. It has been contended that the same is evident from the fact that notice under Section 50 of the NDPS Act issued to the petitioner placed on record at Annexure P-6 bears no FIR number whereas the consent memo (Annexure P-7) shows FIR number.

5. Counsel for the petitioner submits that so much so even the signatures of witness-1 i.e. Kulwant Singh are different on both the memo and notice and similarly there is a difference between the signatures alleged to be of petitioner-accused. Apart from that the petitioner is in custody for more than 1 year 11 months and 13 days. The quantity recovered from the petitioner is just above the commercial quantity. Counsel further contends that the investigation already stands concluded. Majority of the witnesses being official there is hardly any apprehension that the petitioner shall tamper with the evidence. It has been further contended that after about two years the petitioner being in custody, no witness has been examined till date and the trial is thus likely to take long time. He further contends that the petitioner has no criminal antecedents.

6. Learned counsel for the petitioner relies upon order passed by Apex Court in the case of Rabi Prakash Vs. The State of Odisha passed in Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No(s). 4169 of 2023 decided on 13.07.2023 wherein it has been held as under :-

2 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 "4. As regard to the twin conditions contained in Section 37 of the NDPS Act, learned counsel for the respondent - State has been duly heard. Thus, the 1st condition stands complied with. So far as the 2nd condition re: formation of opinion as to whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that the petitioner is not guilty, the same may not be formed at this stage when he has already spent more than three and a half years in custody. The prolonged incarceration, generally militates against the most precious fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution and in such a situation, the conditional liberty must override the statutory embargo created under Section 37(1)(b)(ii) of the NDPS Act."

7. Earlier to Rabi Prakash's case (supra) also Apex Court has consistently held that the prolonged incarceration has to be considered de hors bar contained under Section 37 of the NDPS Act. The Supreme Court in order dated 22.08.2022 passed by the Supreme Court in Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No.5530-2022 titled as "Mohammad Salman Hanif Shaikh Vs. The State of Gujarat, had held as under:-

"We are inclined to release the petitioner on bail only on the ground that he has spent about two years in custody and conclusion of trial will take some time.

Consequently, without expressing any views on the merits of the case and taking into consideration the custody period of the petitioner, this special leave petition is accepted and the petitioner is ordered to be released on bail subject to his furnishing the bail bonds to the satisfaction of the Special Judge/ concerned Trial Court.

The special leave petition is, accordingly, disposed of in the above terms.

Pending application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed of."

3 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382

8. The above-said case was also a case under the NDPS Act, 1985 and the FIR had been registered under Sections 8(c), 21(c) and 29 of the said Act. The case of the prosecution therein was that the recovery from the said petitioner (therein) was of commercial quantity. The Supreme Court had observed that the concession of bail was granted to the petitioner (therein) only on the ground that he had spent about two years in custody and the conclusion of trial will take some time.

9. Supreme Court in order dated 07.02.2020 passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Criminal Appeal No.245/2020 titled as "Chitta Biswas Alias Subhas vs. The State of West Bengal" was pleased to grant concession of bail to the petitioner (therein) in a case where the custody was of 1 year and 7 months approximately. The relevant portion of the said order dated 07.02.2020 is as under: -

"Leave granted.

This appeal arises out of the final Order dated 30.7.2010 passed by the High Court of Calcutta in CRM No.6787 of 2019.

The instant matter arises out of application preferred by the appellant under Section 439 Cr.P.C. seeking bail in connection with Criminal Case No.146 of 2018 registered with Taherpur Police Station for offence punishable under Section 21-C of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

According to the prosecution, the appellant was found to be in possession of narcotic substance i.e. 46 bottles of phensydryl cough syrup containing codeine mixture above commercial quantity.

The appellant was arrested on 21.07.2018 and continues to be in custody. It appears that out of 10 witnesses cited to be 4 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 examined in support of the case of prosecution four witnesses have already been examined in the trial.

Without expressing any opinion on the merits or demerits of the rival submissions and considering the facts and circumstances on record, in our view, case for bail is made out. We therefore, allow this appeal and direct as under:

(a) Subject to furnishing bail bond in the sum of Rs.2 lakhs with two like sureties to the satisfaction of the Judge, Special Court, NDPS Act, Nadia at Krishnagar, the appellant shall be released on bail.

(b) The Special Court may impose such other conditions as it deems appropriate to ensure the presence and participation of the appellant in the pending trial. With the aforesaid directions, the appeal stands allowed."

10. In order dated 05.08.2022 passed by the Supreme Court in Criminal Appeal No.1169 of 2022 titled as "Gopal Krishna Patra @ Gopalrusma vs. Union of India," the Supreme Court was pleased to observe as under: -

"Leave granted.

This appeal challenges the judgment and order dated 25.01.2022 passed by the High Court Of Madhya Pradesh, Principal Seat at Jabalpur, in MCRC No.117/2022. The appellant is in custody since 18.06.2020 in connection with crime registered as N.C.B. Crime No.02/2020 in respect of offences punishable under Sections 8, 20, 27-AA, 28 read with 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

The application seeking relief of bail having been rejected, the instant appeal has been filed.

We have heard Mr. Ashok Kumar Panda, learned Senior Advocate in support of the appeal and Mr. Sanjay Jain, learned Additional Solicitor General for the respondent.

5 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 Considering the facts and circumstances on record and the length of custody undergone by the appellant, in our view the case for bail is made out.

We therefore, direct that:

(a) The appellant shall be produced before the Trial Court within five days from today.

(b) The Trial Court shall release the appellant on bail subject to such conditions as the Trial Court may deem appropriate to impose.

(c) The appellant shall not in any manner misuse his liberty.

(d) Any infraction shall entail in withdrawal of the benefit granted by this Order.

The appeal is allowed in aforesaid terms."

11. In order dated 01.08.2022 passed by the Supreme Court in Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No.5769/2022 titled as "Nitish Adhikary @ Bapan Vs. The State of West Bengal" Supreme Court has observed as under: -

"As per the office report dated 29.07.2022, copy of the show cause notice along with Special Leave Petition was supplied to the Standing Counsel for the State of West Bengal and separate notice has been served on the State also. However, no one has entered appearance on their behalf.

The petitioner seeks enlargement on bail in F.I.R. No. 612 of 2020 dated 17.10.2020 filed under Section 21(c) and 37 of the NDPS Act, registered at Police Station Bongaon, West Bengal.

During the course of the hearing, we are informed that the petitioner has undergone custody for a period of 01 year and 07 months as on 09.06.2022. The trial is at a preliminary stage, as only one witness has been examined. The petitioner does not have any criminal antecedents.

6 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 Taking into consideration the period of sentence undergone by the petitioner and all the attending circumstances but without expressing any views in the merits of the case, we are inclined to grant bail to the petitioner.

The petitioner is accordingly, directed to be released on bail subject to him furnishing bail bonds to the satisfaction of the Trial Court.

The Special Leave Petition is disposed of on the aforestated terms.

Pending application(s), if any, shall stand disposed of."

12. The aforesaid factual assertions made by counsel for the petitioner based on record are not disputed by counsel representing the State. However, he submits that keeping in view the quantity of contraband recovered from the petitioner, rigors of Section 37 of the NDPS Act will be attracted.

13. Having heard Ld. Counsel for the parties, I found that the petitioner has suffered prolonged incarceration of more than 1 year 11 months and 13 days. There is no other case against the petitioner. In the trial, no witness has been examined till date. Thus, trial is not expected to conclude in near future.

14. In the case of Shariful Islam @ Sarif' case (supra), Apex Court found that an under-trial having suffered incarceration over 1 year and 6 months is entitled for grant of regular bail holding that :-

"2. Taking into consideration the fact that the petitioner is reported to be in custody since 27-1-2021 and has suffered incarceration for over 1 year 6 months and there being no 7 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 likelihood of completion of trial in the near future, which fact cannot be controverted by the learned counsel appearing for the State, we are inclined to grant him bail.

3. The petitioner is, therefore, directed to be released on bail, subject to such terms and conditions which the concerned Trial Court may deem fit and find appropriate to impose upon him."

15. Similarly, the Supreme Court in Gopal Krishna Patra @ Gopalrusma's case (supra) ordered as under :-

"The appellant is in custody since 18.06.2020 in connection with crime registered as N.C.B. Crime No. 02/2020 in respect of offences punishable under Sections 8, 20, 27-AA, 28 read with 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 19851.

The application seeking relief of bail having been rejected, the instant appeal has been filed.

We have heard Mr. Ashok Kumar Panda, learned Senior Advocate in support of the appeal and Mr. Sanjay Jain, learned. Additional Solicitor General for the respondent.

Considering the facts and circumstances on record and the length of custody undergone by the appellant, in our view the case for bail is made out."

16. The Supreme Court in Chitta Biswas @ Subhas's case (supra) ordered as under :-

"The instant matter arises out of application preferred by the appellant under Section 439 Cr.P.C. seeking bail in connection with Criminal Case No.146 of 2018 registered with Taherpur Police Station for offence punishable under Section 21-C of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

According to the prosecution, the appellant was found to be in possession of narcotic substance i.e. 46 bottles of phensydryl 8 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 cough syrup containing codeine mixture above commercial quantity.

The appellant was arrested on 21.07.2018 and continues to be in custody. It appears that out of 10 witnesses cited to be examined in support of the case of prosecution four witnesses have already been examined in the trial.

Without expressing any opinion on the merits or demerits of the rival submissions and considering the facts and circumstances on record, in our view, case for bail is made out."

17. The Supreme Court in another judgment passed in Mohammad Salman Hanif's case (supra) ordered as under :-

"The petitioner seeks enlargement on regular bail in the case FIR being C.R.No.NDPS/11192015200884/2020 registered at Changodar Police Station, District Ahmedabad (Rural) for the offences punishable under Sections 8(c), 21(c) and 29 of the NDPS Act.

As per the allegations, 358 bottles of cough syrup containing codein of 'commercial quantity' was recovered from the petitioner.

We have heard learned counsels for the parties and are of the considered opinion that the questions like whether the contraband recovered from the petitioner is of 'commercial quantity' or whether codein phosphate is a manufactured drug or a narcotic substance, need not be go into at this stage.

We are inclined to release the petitioner on bail only on the ground that he has spent about two years in custody and conclusion of trial will take some time.

Consequently, without expressing any views on the merits of the case and taking into consideration the custody period of the petitioner, this special leave petition is accepted and the petitioner is ordered to be released on bail subject to his furnishing the bail bonds to the satisfaction of the Special Judge/ concerned Trial 9 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 Court."

18. Division Bench of this Court in Bhupender Singh vs. Narcotic Control Bureau, (2022) 2 RCR (Criminal) 706 after considering issue with respect to achieving balance between right to speedy trial guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India and the rigors enumerated under Section 37 of the Act held that convict/accused is not precluded from claiming bail invoking parameters of Article 21 of the Constitution of India dehors the stringent provisions of Section 37 of the Act.

19. Right to speedy trial is one of the objectives of NDPS Act and is rather one of the checks and balances provided under the Act. Section 36 of the NDPS Act recognizes the need for speedy trial. The constitution of Special Courts is means to achieve the said objective of speedy trial. It is only with an objective to synthesize the right to speedy trial and rigors of Section 37 that the Supreme Court in the afore-referred cases granted concession of regular bail to the under-trials merely on the basis of long incarceration that they have suffered owing to delay in trial.

20. Having heard counsel for the parties and after going through records of the case without commenting on the merits, this Court finds that keeping in view incarceration suffered by the petitioner and the fact that not even a single witness has been examined till date, present petition is allowed. The petitioner is ordered to be released on bail on his furnishing 10 of 11 Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:102382 2023:PHHC:102382 bail/surety bonds to the satisfaction of the Ld. Trial Court/Duty Magistrate, concerned. However, in addition to conditions that may be imposed by the Trial Court/Duty Magistrate concerned, the petitioner shall remain bound by the following conditions :-

- (i) The petitioner shall not mis-use the liberty granted.
- (ii) The petitioner shall not tamper with any evidence oral or documentary during the trial.
- (iii) The petitioner shall not absent himself on any date before the trial.
- (iv) The petitioner shall not commit any offence similar to the one alleged in the present case.
- (v) The petitioner shall deposit his passport, if any with the trial Court.
- (vi) The petitioner shall give his cellphone number to the police authorities and shall not change his cell-phone number without permission of the trial Court.
- (vii) The petitioner shall not in any manner try to delay the trial.

21. In case of breach of any of the aforesaid conditions and those which may be imposed by the Trial Court, the prosecution shall be at liberty to move cancellation of bail of the petitioner.

22. Ordered accordingly.

August 08, 2023
Dpr

Whether speaking/reasoned
Whether reportable

(Pankaj Jain)
Judge
: Yes/No
: Yes/No

Neutral Citation No:=2023:PHHC:1023