

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 27.10.2015

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE DR.JUSTICE S.TAMILVANAN
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE C.T.SELVAM

H.C.P.No.1757/2015

Meharoonisha

.. Petitioner

vs.

- 1.The Secretary to Government,
Ministry of Consumer Affairs,
Food and Public Distribution,
(Department of Consumer Affairs),
Room No.270, Krishi Bhavan,
New Delhi 110 001.
- 2.The Secretary to Government,
Food and Consumer Protection Department,
2nd Floor, Namakkal Kavignar Maligai,
Fort St. George, Chennai 600 009.
- 3.The District Magistrate and District Collector,
Villupuram District, Villupuram. .. Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus calling for the records relating to the second respondent pertaining to the detention order made in No.C2/12758/2015 dated 08.07.2015 detaining the detenu under Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act 1980 (Act VII of 1980) as a Black Marketer and quash the same and further direct the respondents to produce the detenu namely Salavudeen, son of Yusuf, aged about 42 years, who is detained at Central Prison, Cuddalore, before this Court and set him at liberty.

For petitioner : Mr.D.Veerasekaran

For respondents: Mr.M.Maharaja,

APP for R2 and R3

Mr.S.Arockiam, CGSC for R1

O R D E R

(Order of the Court made by S.TAMILVANAN, J.)

The Petitioner, who is the wife of the detenu Salavudeen, son of Yusuf, aged about 42 years, has filed this petition challenging the order of detention passed by the 3rd respondent in No.C2/12758/2015 dated 08.07.2015, branding the detenu as a "Black Marketer" under the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Bootleggers, Drug Offenders, Forest Offenders, Goondas, Immoral Traffic Offenders, Sand Offenders, Slum Grabbers and Video Pirates Act, 1982 [Tamil Nadu Act 14 of 1982].

2. Even though the learned counsel for the petitioner raised many grounds in assailing the impugned order of detention in the petition, he confined his arguments only to the ground of delay in considering the representation of the detenu, dated 16.07.2015. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, the representation dated 16.07.2015, has been received by the Government on 20.07.2015; the remarks were called on 21.07.2015. But the said remarks were received only on 03.08.2015; after a delay of thirteen days. He adds that though the file was submitted to the Under Secretary on 05.08.2015, the Minister has dealt with the said file of the detenu only on 10.08.2015, with a further delay of five days and the rejection letter was sent to the detenu on the same day i.e. on 10.08.2015. It is his further submission that as per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there were five intervening holidays and even after giving concession as to the intervening holidays, still there is a delay of eight days, which remains unexplained. The unexplained delay in considering the representation of the detenu vitiates the detention order. In support of his contention, the learned counsel for the petitioner relied on the judgment of the Hon'ble Apex Court in Rajammal vs. State of Tamil Nadu, reported in (1999) 1 SCC 417.

3. Resisting the contention of the learned counsel for the petitioner, learned Additional Public Prosecutor submitted that the Government received the representation on 20.07.2015 and that was forwarded to the Detaining Authority, calling for remarks on 21.07.2015 and remarks were received by the Government on 03.08.2015 and ultimately, the representation was considered and rejected on 10.08.2015 and the result of the consideration was communicated to the detenu on the same day itself i.e. on 10.08.2015. Therefore, according to the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there is no inordinate delay in considering the representation of the detenu and therefore, he prayed for dismissal of the petition.

4.We have considered the rival submissions carefully with regard to facts and citation and perused the materials available on record.

5.As per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, on the representation of the detenu, dated 16.07.2015 which was received by the Government on 20.07.2015, remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 21.07.2015. But, remarks have been received by the Government only on 03.08.2015 and the case of the detenu was dealt with by the Minister only on 10.08.2015, i.e., after a delay of seven days and thereafter, the representation has been considered by the authorities concerned and rejected on the same day. From the above, it is clear that in between 21.07.2015 and 03.08.2015, there is a delay of thirteen days. Even if we give concession to the five intervening holidays, namely 25.07.2015, 26.07.2015, 30.07.2015, 01.08.2015 and 02.08.2015, still there is a delay of eight days, which remain unexplained.

6.It is trite law that the representation should be very expeditiously considered and disposed of with a sense of urgency and without avoidable delay. Any unexplained delay in the disposal of the representation would be a breach of the constitutional imperative and it would render the continued detention impermissible and illegal. From the records produced, we find that no acceptable explanation has been offered for the delay of eight days. Therefore, we have to hold that the delay has vitiated further detention of the detenu.

7.In the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Rajammal's case (cited supra), it has been held as follows:

"It is a constitutional obligation of the Government to consider the representation forwarded by the detenu without any delay. Though no period is prescribed by Article 22 of the Constitution for the decision to be taken on the representation, the words "as soon as may be" in clause (5) of Article 22 convey the message that the representation should be considered and disposed of at the earliest."

8.As per the dictum laid down by the Supreme Court in above cited Rajammal's case, number of days of delay is immaterial and what is to be considered is whether the delay caused has been properly explained by the authorities concerned. But, here eight days delay has not been properly explained at all.

9.Further, in a recent decision in Ummu Sabeena vs. State of Kerala - 2011 STPL (Web) 999 SC, the Supreme Court has held that the history of personal liberty, as is well known, is a history of insistence on procedural safeguards. The expression 'as soon as may be', in Article 22(5) of the Constitution of

India clearly shows the concern of the makers of the Constitution that the representation, made on behalf of the detenu, should be considered and disposed of with a sense of urgency and without any avoidable delay.

10. In the light of the above fact and law, we have no hesitation in quashing the order of detention on the ground of delay on the part of the Government in disposing of the representation of the detenu.

11. Accordingly, the habeas corpus petition is allowed and the detention order in No.C2/12758/2015 dated 08.07.2015, passed by the 3rd respondent is quashed. The detenu is directed to be set at liberty, forthwith, unless his presence is required in connection with any other case.

-s/d-
Assistant Registrar

True Copy

Sub-Assistant Registrar

vga
To

1. The Secretary to Government,
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(Department of Consumer Affairs),
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3. The District Magistrate and District Collector,
Villupuram District, Villupuram.
4. The Superintendent of Central Prison,
Cuddalore
5. The Public Prosecutor, High Court, Madras.
6. The Secretary to Government
Public Law & Order Fort St. George
Chennai-09

+1 cc to Mr.D.Veerasekaran Advocate sr.58477
+1 cc to Mr.S.Arockiam CGSC sr.58263

H.C.P.No.1757/2015

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