

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 05.01.2016

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE R.SUDHAKAR
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE P.N.PRAKASH
H.C.P.No.2176 of 2015

Kavitha

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Petitioner

Vs.

1.The Additional Secretary
Government of India, Ministry of Consumer
Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
[Dept. of Consumer Affairs]
Room No.270, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi 110001.

2.The Secretary to Government
Cooperation, Food & Consumer Protection
Department, Namakkal Kavignar Maaligai
II Floor, Secretariat, Chennai-9.

3.The District Magistrate & District Collector
Krishnagiri, Krishnagiri District.

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Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus calling for the entire records connected with the detention order of the 3rd respondent in SC.No.81/2015 [CS] dated 15.08.2015 and quash the same and direct the respondents to produce the body and person of the petitioner's husband by name Kolinji, son of Perumal, aged about 37 years, detained in Central Prison, Salem, before this Court and set him at liberty forthwith.

For Petitioner : Mr.S.Mohamed Ansar

For R1 : Mr.G.Venkatesan, CGC

For RR 2 and 3 : Mr.M.Maharaja, APP

O R D E R

[Order of the Court was made by P.N.PRAKASH, J.]

The petitioner herein is the wife of the detenu and she has filed this petition challenging the order of detention passed by the third respondent in SC.No.81/2015 [CS] dated 15.08.2015, branding her husband as a "BLACK MARKETER" under the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 [Act 7 of 1980].

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. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, the representation of the detenu dated 29.08.2015, has been received by the Government on 02.09.2015 and remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 07.09.2015; but, the remarks have been received by the Government only on 29.09.2015, after a delay of 22 days. He adds that the file was dealt with by the Minister concerned on 06.10.2015 and the rejection letter was prepared on 06.10.2015 and communicated to the detenu on 07.10.2015. It is his further submission that as per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there were 8 intervening holidays and even after giving concession as to the intervening holidays including Government Holidays, still there is a delay of 14 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 02.09.2015 and that was forwarded to the Detaining Authority, calling for remarks on 07.09.2015 and remarks were received by the Government on 29.09.2015 and ultimately, the representation was considered and rejected on 06.10.2015 and the result of the consideration was communicated to the detenu on 07.10.2015. 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 29.08.2015 was received by the Government on 02.09.2015 and remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 07.09.2015. But, remarks have been received by the Government only on 29.09.2015, i.e., after a delay of 22 days and the case of the detenu was dealt with by the Minister concerned on 06.10.2015 and the same was rejected on the same day, i.e., on 06.10.2015. From the above, it is clear that in between 07.09.2015 and 29.09.2015, [i.e., the intermittent days between the remarks called for and the remarks received] there is a delay of 22 days. Even if we give concession to the 8 intervening holidays including Government holidays, namely 12.09.2015, 13.09.2015, 17.09.2015, 19.09.2015, 20.09.2015, 24.09.2015, 26.09.2015 and 27.09.2015, still there is a delay of 14 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 14 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 14 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 passed by the third respondent is quashed. The detenu is directed to be set at liberty, forthwith, unless his presence is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-
Asst. Registrar (CS II)

/true copy/

Sub Asst. Registrar

AP

To

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Krishnagiri, Krishnagiri District.

4. The Public Prosecutor, High Court, Madras.

5. The Joint Secretary to Government
Public (L & O)
Fort St. George, Chennai-9

6. The Superintendent
Central Prison, Salem

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MP (CO)
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