

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 22.6.2016

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE S.NAGAMUTHU
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE V.BHARATHIDASAN

H.C.P.No.537 OF 2016

Tmt. S.MohanaSundari

.. Petitioner

Vs.

1. The Principal Secretary to Government,
Co-operation, Food and Consumer Protection
Department,
2nd floor, Namakkal Kavingar Maligai,
Secretariat, Chennai-9.

2. The District Collector and District Magistrate,
Erode District, Erode.

3. The Addl. Secretary to Government of India,
Ministry of consumer affairs,
Food and Public Distribution,
(Department of consumer affairs)
Room No. 270, Krish Bhavan,
New Delhi 100 001.

... Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus calling for the entire records in connection with the order of detention passed by the second respondent dated 30.12.2015 in Cr.M.P.No.48/Black Marketer/2015/C1 against the petitioner's husband Saravanan @ Saravanakumar, son of Late Ram @ Ramdoss, aged about 34 years, who is confined at Central Prison, Coimbatore and set aside the same and direct the respondents to produce the detenu before this Court and set him at liberty.

For Petitioner: Mr.V.Paarthiban
For R1 & R2 : Mr.A.N.Thambi Durai
Addl. Public Prosecutor
For R3 : Mr.S.Arockiam, CGSC

O R D E R

[Order of the Court was made by S.NAGAMUTHU, J.]

This Habeas Corpus Petition has been filed by the wife of the detenu, namely, Saravanan @ Saravanakumar, aged 34 years, son of Late Ram alias Ramdoss, to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus, to call

for the records in Cr.M.P.No.48/Black Marketer/2015/C1, dated 30.12.2015, passed by the 2nd respondent, detaining the detenu, under the provision of Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 (Central Act 7 of 1980), branding him as a "Black Marketer", and to quash the same and to direct the respondents to produce the body and person of the detenu and set him at liberty.

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, has been received by the Government on 21.03.2016 and remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 28.03.2016. However, the remarks have been received by the Government only on 27.04.2016, after a delay of 30 days. He adds that the file was dealt with by the Minister concerned on 05.05.2016 and the rejection letter was communicated to the detenu on 05.05.2016. It is his further submission that as per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there were 11 intervening holidays and even after giving concession as to the intervening holidays, still there is a delay of 19 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, the learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing for the respondents had submitted that the impugned detention order has been passed on cogent and sufficient materials and there is no illegality or infirmity in the impugned order of detention. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor had further submitted that there was no deliberate delay on the part of the authorities concerned to consider and dispose of the representation of the detenu. It is contended that such a delay is not fatal to the impugned detention order, as the authorities concerned are dealing with the file right from the date of receipt of the representation 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, the representation of the detenu was received by the Government on 21.03.2016 and remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 28.03.2016. However, remarks have been received by the Government only on 27.04.2016, i.e., after a delay of 30 days and the case of the detenu was dealt with by the Minister

concerned on 05.05.2016 and the same was rejected on 05.05.2016. From the above, it is clear that in between 28.03.2016 and 27.04.2016, [i.e., the intermittent days between the remarks called for and the remarks received] there is a delay of 30 days. Even if we give concession to the 11 intervening holidays including Government holidays, namely 02.04.2016, 03.04.2016, 08.4.2016, 09.04.2016, 10.04.2016, 14.4.2016, 16.4.2016, 17.04.2016, 19.04.2016, 23.04.2016 and 24.04.2016, still there is a delay of 19 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 19 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 19 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 dated 30.12.2015, passed by the 2nd 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 VI)

/true copy/

Sub Asst. Registrar

To

1. The Principal Secretary to Government,
Co-operation, Food and Consumer Protection
Department,
2nd floor, Namakkal Kavingar Maligai,
Secretariat, Chennai-9.
 2. The District Collector and District Magistrate,
Erode District, Erode.
 3. The Addl. Secretary to Government of India,
Ministry of consumer affairs,
Food and Public Distribution,
(Department of consumer affairs)
Room No. 270, Krish Bhavan,
New Delhi 100 001.
 - 4.The Joint Secretary to Govt.,
Public (L&O) Fort St.George,Chennai.
 - 5.The Superintendent, central Prison, Coimbatore.
 - 6.The Public Prosecutor, High Court, Madras.
- +1 cc to Mr.S.Arockiam, Advocate,sr.34443.

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krd 22/7

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