

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

CRM-M-30809-2017 (O&M)

Date of decision: 18.01.2018

Lakhwinder Singh @ Lakha

... Petitioner

Vs.

State of Punjab

... Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE TEJINDER SINGH DHINDSA.

Present: Mr. Rishu Mahajan, Advocate for the petitioner.

Ms. Jaspreet Kaur, AAG, Punjab.

...

TEJINDER SINGH DHINDSA, J. (ORAL).

The instant petition has been filed under Section 439 Cr.P.C. seeking benefit of regular bail to the petitioner pending trial in case FIR No.7, dated 16.01.2015, under Section 22 of the NDPS Act, registered at Police Station Beas, District Amritsar.

Prosecution version is that ASI Dilbag Singh had apprehended the petitioner and an alleged recovery of 165 grams of intoxicating powder was effected and which on receipt of the report of Chemical Examiner was found to be containing Alprazolam.

Prayer in the present petition is opposed on the ground that recovery effected from the petitioner would be construed as commercial quantity.

However, there is another aspect of the matter which would require consideration.

Counsel for the petitioner during the course of arguments has placed reliance upon Notification dated 03.09.1987 issued by the

Government of Punjab, Department of Excise and Taxation and in terms of which it is only officers of the rank of ASI and above who could have exercised the powers and perform the duties specified under Sections 42 and 67 of the NDPS Act. It was contended that Dilbag Singh, who had conducted the seizure was not holding the rank of ASI on a substantive basis on the pertinent date i.e. 16.01.2015.

During the course of hearing today, learned State counsel would concede that till date Dilbag Singh continues to draw the salary of the post of Head Constable, even though, he was granted ad hoc local rank promotion to the post of ASI.

State counsel contends that as per Notification dated 03.09.1987, there would be no bar envisaged with regard to exercise of powers under Sections 42 and 67 of the NDPS Act at the hands of a Head Constable, who otherwise has been granted the local rank of ASI.

Stand taken on behalf of the State cannot be accepted.

Concededly, on the relevant date when the alleged recovery was effected, Dilbag Singh was not holding the substantive rank of the post of ASI. He had only been granted ad hoc promotion to the local rank of ASI. It has gone uncontroverted that inspite of the grant of such adhoc promotion, Dilbag Singh continues in the pay scale of the post of Head Constable.

The same very issue as regards exercise of powers under Sections 42 and 67 of the NDPS Act by a ad hoc promotee ASI came up for consideration before a Division Bench of this Court in **Bikkar Singh Vs. State of Punjab, 2006 (3) RCR (CRiminal) 16** and it was held as follows:

“12. Secondly, it is evident from the cross-examination

of PW-1 SI Gurmail Singh, who is the Investigating Officer in this case, that he was ad hoc A.S.I and had not passed the departmental course for promotion as A.S.I. Further, it is also admitted by him that he was receiving pay of Constable Grade II at the time of occurrence of this case. Not only that, DW-1/ Constable Preet Inder Singh also proved from the summoned record that the substantive rank of SI Gurmail Singh was Constable Grade II and that his SI rank is only O.R.P. (own rank promotion). He also proved that SI Gurmail Singh had never passed any course for promotion as Head Constable or that of Assistant Sub Inspector. In his further cross examination, he admitted it to be correct that before promotion to the rank of SI, one has to pass the course of Head Constable and also that of ASI. In this view of the matter, it can be safely inferred that he was not competent to exercise the powers and perform the duties specified in Sections 42 and 67 of the Act within the area of his jurisdiction.”

By following the dictum laid down in **Bikkar Singh's case (supra)**, this Court is of the considered view that the petitioner is held entitled to the benefit of regular bail.

Even otherwise investigation is complete and challan stands presented. Trial would take time to conclude.

Without making any observations on merit, present petition is allowed. Petitioner be enlarged on bail subject to satisfaction of the trial Court/Duty Magistrate, Amritsar.

Disposed of.

18.01.2018

harjeet

(TEJINDER SINGH DHINDSA)
JUDGE

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| i) | Whether speaking/reasoned? | Yes/No |
| ii) | Whether reportable? | Yes/No |