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IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED: 27.05.2020

Coram

THE HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE M.M.SUNDRESH
AND
THE HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE P.T.ASHA

H.C.P.No.114 of 2020

C.Hendry Selvam

... Petitioner
/ Son of the detenu.

-vs-

1. The Principal Secretary to Government,
Food and Consumer Protection Department,
2nd Floor, Namakkal Kavinger Maligai,
Secretariat, Chennai - 600 009.
2. The Commissioner of Police,
Greater Chennai,
Office of the Commissioner of Police,
Vepery, Chennai - 600 007.
3. The Secretary to Government,
Government of India,
Ministry of Consumer Affairs,
Food and Public Distribution,
(Department of Consumer Affairs),
Room No.270, Krish Bhavan,
New Delhi - 110 001.

... Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus to call for the records in connection with the order of detention passed by the second respondent dated 14.12.2019 memo No.06/Black Marketing Act/2019 against the petitioner's father Christopher, son of Jebamani, aged about 54 years, who is confined at Central Prison, Puzhal, Chennai and set aside the same and direct the respondents to produce the detenu before the Court and set him at liberty.

For Petitioner .. Mr.V.Parthiban

For Respondents .. Mr.R.Prathap Kumar,
Addl. Public Prosecutor for R1 & R2



ORDER

[Order of the Court was made by M.M.SUNDRESH, J.]

The petitioner is the son of Christopher, male, aged 54 years, S/o.Jebamani, who is the detenu. The detenu has been detained by the second respondent by his order in No.06/2019 dated 14.12.2019, holding him to be a "Black Marketer", as contemplated under the provisions of Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 (Central Act 7 of 1980). The said order is under challenge in this Habeas Corpus Petition.

2. We have heard the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner and the learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing for the respondents. We have also perused the records produced by the Detaining Authority.

3. Though several grounds have been raised in the Habeas Corpus Petition, the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner would mainly focus his argument on the ground that there is gross violation of procedural safeguards, which would vitiate the detention. The learned counsel, by placing authorities, submitted that the representation made by the petitioner was not considered on time and there was an inordinate and unexplained delay.

4. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor opposed the Habeas Corpus Petition. He would submit that though there was delay in considering the representation, on that score alone, the impugned detention order cannot be quashed. According to the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, no prejudice has been caused to the detenu and thus, there is no violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution of India.

5. The Detention Order in question was passed on 14.12.2019. The petitioner made a representation on 31.12.2019. Thereafter, remarks were called for by the Government from the Detaining Authority on 07.01.2020. The remarks were duly received on 14.01.2020. Thereafter, the Government considered the matter and passed the order rejecting the petitioner's representation on 21.01.2020.

6. It is the contention of the petitioner that there was a delay of 7 days in submitting the remarks by the Detaining Authority, of which 2 days were Government Holidays and hence there was an inordinate delay of 5 days in submitting the remarks. It is the further contention of the petitioner that the remarks were received on 14.01.2020 and there was delay of 7 days in considering the representation by the Hon'ble Minister



for Electricity, Prohibition and Excise Department after the Deputy Secretary dealt with it, of which 5 days were Government Holidays, hence, there was inordinate delay of 2 days in considering the representation.

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7. In *Rekha vs. State of Tamil Nadu* (2011 (5) SCC 244), the Honourable Supreme Court has held that the procedural safeguards are required to be zealously watched and enforced by the Courts of law and their rigour cannot be allowed to be diluted on the basis of the nature of the alleged activities undertaken by the detenu.

8. In *Sumaiya vs. The Secretary to Government* (2007 (2) MWN (Cr.) 145), a Division Bench of this Court has held that the unexplained delay of three days in disposal of the representation made on behalf of the detenu would be sufficient to set aside the order of detention.

9. In *Tara Chand vs. State of Rajasthan and others*, reported in 1980 (2) SCC 321, the Honourable Supreme Court has held that any inordinate and unexplained delay on the part of the Government in considering the representation renders the very detention illegal.

10. In the subject case, admittedly, there is an inordinate and unexplained delay of 5 days in submitting the remarks and 2 days in considering the representation by the Hon'ble Minister for Electricity, Prohibition and Excise Department. The impugned detention order is, therefore, liable to be quashed.

11. In the result, the Habeas Corpus Petition is allowed and the order of detention in No.06/2019 dated 14.12.2019, passed by the second respondent is set aside. The detenu, namely, Christopher, male, aged 54 years, S/o.Jebamani, is directed to be released forthwith unless his detention is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

mmi/ms



To

1. The Principal Secretary to Government,
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Room No.270, Krish Bhavan, New Delhi - 110 001.
4. The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.
5. The Superintendent,
Central Prison, Puzhal, Chennai.
6. The Joint Secretary to Government,
Public (law & order),
Fort St. George, Chennai.

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SJ(CO)
KKV/08/07/2020