

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 15.06.2021

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE P.N.PRAKASH
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE R.PONGIAPPAN

H.C.P.No.441 of 2021

Suguna,
W/o.Sundar @ Sundarraman ... Petitioner /
Wife of the detenu

versus

- 1.The Additional Secretary to
Government of India,
Ministry of Consumer Affairs,
Food and Public Distribution
(Department of Consumer Affairs),
Room No.270, Krishi Bhawan,
New Delhi - 110 001.
 - 2.The Principal Secretary to the Government,
Food and Consumer Protection Department,
II Floor, Namakkal Kavignar Maaligai,
Secretariat, Chennai - 600 009.
 - 3.The District Collector and
District Magistrate of Thirupathur District,
Office of the District Collector and
District Magistrate of Thirupathur District,
Thirupathur.
 - 4.The Superintendent of Police,
Thirupathur District, Thirupathur.
 - 5.The Superintendent of Prison,
Central Prison, Vellore,
Vellore District.
 - 6.The Inspector of Police,
Civil Supplies CID, Vellore Unit,
Vellore District.
- ... 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 detention order passed in C3/D.O.No.06/2021 dated 16.02.2021 passed by the third respondent under Section 3(1) r/w 3(2) (a) of the Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act 1980 (Act 7 of 1980) and set aside the same and direct the respondents to produce the petitioner's husband Sundar @ Sundarraman, son of Chellamuthu, aged about 34 years, the detenu, now confined in Central Prison, Vellore, before this Court and set the petitioner's husband Sundar @ Sundarraman, son of Chellamuthu, aged about 34 years, the detenu herein at liberty.

For Petitioner : Mr.D.Gopi Krishnan

For Respondents : Mr.R.Muniyapparaj
Government Advocate (Crl. Side)

O R D E R

[Order of the Court was made by R.PONGIAPPAN, J.]

The petitioner is the wife of Sundar @ Sundarraman, son of Chellamuthu, aged about 34 years, who is the detenu. The detenu has been detained by the third respondent by its order dated 16.02.2021 in C3/D.O.No.06/2021, holding him to be a "Black Marketeer", as contemplated under Section 3(1) r/w 3(2) (a) of the Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act 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 Government Advocate (Crl. Side) appearing for the respondents. We have also perused the records produced by the Detaining Authority.

3. Though several grounds have been raised in this Petition, 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 Government Advocate (Crl. Side) opposed this 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 Government Advocate (Crl. Side), 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 16.02.2021. The petitioner made a representation on 03.03.2021. Thereafter, remarks were called for by the Government from the Detaining Authority on 05.03.2021. The remarks were duly received on 29.03.2021. Thereafter, the Government considered the matter and passed the order rejecting the petitioner's representation on 15.04.2021.

6. It is the contention of the petitioner that there was a delay of 24 days in submitting the remarks by the Detaining Authority, of which 8 days were Government Holidays and hence, there was an inordinate delay of 16 days in submitting the remarks. It is the further contention of the petitioner that the remarks were received on 29.03.2021 and there was a delay of 12 days in considering the representation by the Hon'ble Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Department after the Deputy Secretary dealt with it, of which 5 days were Government Holidays, hence, there was inordinate delay of 7 days in considering the representation.

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 16 days in submitting the remarks by the Detaining Authority and unexplained delay of 7 days in considering the representation by the Hon'ble Minister for Food and Civil Supplies 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 C3/D.O.No.06/2021 dated 16.02.2021, passed by the third respondent is set aside. The detenu, viz. Sundar @ Sundarraman, son of Chellamuthu, aged about 34 years, is directed to be released forthwith unless his detention is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-
Assistant Registrar(CS IV)

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

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To

- 1.The Additional Secretary to
Government of India,
Ministry of Consumer Affairs,
Food and Public Distribution
(Department of Consumer Affairs),
Room No.270, Krishi Bhawan,
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5.The Superintendent of Prison,
Central Prison, Vellore,
Vellore District.

6.The Inspector of Police,
Civil Supplies CID, Vellore Unit,
Vellore District.

7.The Joint Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu,
Public, Law and Order Department,
Secretariat, Chennai - 9.

8.The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.

H.C.P.No.441 of 2021

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