

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT PATNA
Civil Writ Jurisdiction Case No.8058 of 2022

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Hemanti Devi W/o Late Sharan Sao, resident of Village- R.K. Bhattacharya
Road, P.S.- Gandhi Maidan, District- Patna.

... .. Petitioner/s

Versus

1. The State of Bihar through the Principal Secretary, Excise Department,
Government of Bihar, Patna.
2. The District Magistrate, Patna.
3. The Senior Superintendent of Police, Patna.
4. The S.H.O. Agamkuan Police Station, District- Patna.

... .. Respondent/s

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Appearance :

For the Petitioner/s : Mr.Ambuj Kumar Chandra, Adv
For the Respondent/s : Mr.Vikash Kumar (SC 11)

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CORAM: HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

and

HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR

ORAL JUDGMENT

(Per: HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR)

Date : 23-06-2022

Heard learned counsel for the parties.

Petitioner has prayed for the following relief(s):-

- I. For issuance of an appropriate writ commanding the respondents for the direction to amend the provision contained in section 12(B) of Bihar Prohibition of Excise Amendment Rules 2022 by specifying a maximum reasonable fine amount beyond which the fine cannot be imposed upon the landlord/concerned person for the unsealing of the premises under the said act/rule.
- II. For direction to reducing the minimum prescribed fine of rupees one lakh to a lower reasonable amount.
- III. For direction to deletion of the provision contained in 12(B)(1) which mandatorily makes the landlord liable to pay the penalty for the unsealing of his premises, while ignoring his involvement in the concerned excise case.

Petitioner claims to be the owner of the seized warehouse from which illicit spirit has been recovered.

Mr. Vikash Kumar, learned counsel for the State, states that if petitioner will pursue the remedy in accordance with law, the competent officer shall decide the application expeditiously and sympathetically accounting for all the facts. He clarifies that the appropriate decision shall be taken in terms of Rule 12(B)

and 57B of the amended Bihar Prohibition and Excise Rules, 2021.

Statement accepted and taken on record.

Amended Rule 12(B) and 57B of the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Rules, 2021, has been reproduced:-

"12B. Release of Premises on Payment of Penalty: - (1) If any premises or part thereof has been seized or sealed by any police or excise officer under the Act, then in terms of section-57B (2) of the Act, the Collector or an officer authorized by him, upon receipt of an application in Form V from the owner of the said premises, may release or unseal the said premises or part thereof upon payment of such penalty as may be ordered by the Collector or the officer authorized by him. Provided, where it is not possible to ascertain the owner of the premises or the owner is not coming forward, the Collector or the officer authorized by him shall, after waiting for 15 days from the date of seizure/sealing, proceed to confiscate the premises as per the provisions of the Act.

(2) The Collector or the officer authorized by him shall have due regard to the economic status of the individual, nature of his involvement in the crime, location of the premises and the quantum of intoxicant recovered while deciding the quantum of fine to be paid by the individual. However, the fine shall not be less than Rs. one Lakh in any case. In any case, the Collector shall not wait beyond 15 days from the date of seizure/sealing and if during this period, the accused/owner does not pay up the penalty he shall proceed with the confiscation/auction.

(3) Notwithstanding above, if on a report by police officer or excise officer, the Collector or the officer authorized by him is satisfied that releasing the premises shall not be in the public interest, the Collector or the officer authorized by him shall proceed ahead with the confiscation of the said premises or part thereof and its subsequent auction/disposal.

(4) Such penalty shall be, regardless of the outcome of the trial if any, before the Special Court, non-refundable.

(5) The owner of the Premises shall, after the release of the premises, allow the inspection of the premises as and when desired by the authorities.

[Explanation: In all pending/ongoing cases of

confiscation/ auction of premises, the Collector or the officer authorized by him may give an opportunity to the existing owner to pay the aforesaid penalty and get the premises released. Upon satisfaction of ownership and upon payment of such penalty, the ongoing confiscation/auction proceeding may be dropped and the premises released.]"

57B-Things or premises liable to be released upon penalty-

(1) Any animal, vehicle, vessel or other conveyance used for committing any offence punishable under this Act that has been seized by any police Officer or Excise Officer may be released by the Collector upon payment of such penalty as may be notified by the State Government.

(2) Any premises or part thereof used for committing any offence punishable under this Act that has been seized by any police Officer or Excise Officer may be released by the Collector upon payment of such penalty as may be notified by the State Government.

(3) If the person concerned does not pay the penalty, then the Collector shall proceed to confiscate the said animal, vehicle, vessel or other conveyance and premises as per section-58.

[Explanation 1: It shall not be a right of the accused to get his conveyance, item or premises released upon payment of the required penalty. The Collector, based upon a report by a police Officer or an Excise Officer, may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, still refuse to release the said conveyance, item or premises and proceed ahead with confiscation and auction/destruction.]

[Explanation 2: The Collector shall, from the date of this Amendment coming into force, close the on-going confiscation proceeding if the person concerned pays the penalty as notified and release such vehicle, conveyance or premises.]

[Explanation 3: Such release shall not affect the outcome of trial, if any, before the Special Court.]”

In said view of the matter, the writ petition is disposed of with liberty to petitioner to avail the remedy of the amended provision of 12(B) and 57B of the Bihar Prohibition & Excise (Amendment) Rules, 2022. It is made clear that this Court has not expressed any opinion with respect to merit of the case.

Equally, liberty reserved to petitioner to approach this Court for same and subsequent cause of action, if so arises.

(Sanjay Karol, CJ)

(S. Kumar, J)

ranjan/-

AFR/NAFR	NAFR
CAV DATE	NA
Uploading Date	
Transmission Date	NA