IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT PATNA
Civil Writ Jurisdiction Case No.20490 of 2021

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Santosh Kumar Ray S/o Deep Narayan Ray Resident of Village- Madhopur, P.S.- Maniyari, District- Muzaffarpur.

... ... Petitioner/s

Versus

1. The State of Bihar through the Principle Secretary cum Addl. Chief Secretary, Department of Excise, Bihar, Patna.
2. The Excise Commissioner, Bihar, Patna.
3. The District Magistrate, Darbhanga
4. The Superintendent of Police, Darbhanga.
5. The Inspector, Excise Prohibition, Sadar Sub Division, Darbhanga.

... ... Respondent/s

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Appearance :
For the Petitioner/s : Mr.Murari Narain Chaudhary, Advocate
For the Respondent/s : Mr.Lalit Kishore (AG)

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CORAM: HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
and
HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR
ORAL JUDGMENT
(Per: HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR)

(The proceedings of the Court are being conducted through Video Conferencing and the Advocates joined the proceedings through Video Conferencing from their residence.)

Date : 01-04-2022

Heard learned counsel for the parties.

Petitioner has prayed for the following relief(s).

> "I For quashing of an order dated 14.09.2021 passed by the learne3d Principle Secretary cum Addl. Chief Secretary, Department of Excise, Bihar, Patna in Excise Revision Case No. 126 of 2021, whereby and where under an order dated 13.07.2021 passed by the learned Excise Commissioner, Bihar, Patna in Excie Appeal Case No. 377 of 2021, affirming an order dated 27.11.2020 passed by the learned District Magistrate, Darbhanga in Confiscation Case No. 125 of 2020 has been affirmed, by which the vehicle of this

petitioner i.e. a Honda Shine motorcycle, bearing registration no. BR-06CG-5379 was confiscated.
II. For a direction to the Respondent's to release the vehicle of this petitioner i.e. a Honda Shine motorcycle, bearing it's Registration No. BR-06CG-5379, which has been illegally seized by the Inspector of Excise Department, Darbhanga in Excise Case No. 160 of 2020 dated 07.02.2020 registered u/s 30(a) of Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016 and is kept in open sky and still lying within the campus of said police station.
III. For any other relief or reliefs, the petitioner is entitled for."

Petitioner claims to be the owner of the seized vehicle.

Allegation is recovery of 15.840 litres of illicit liquor from the seized vehicle of the petitioner.

It is submitted on behalf of counsel for the State that during pendency of writ petition, there has been amendment in the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Rules, 2021 and a new Rule 12(A) has been inserted which reads as under:-

> **"12. A. Release of Vehicles, Conveyance etc. on payment of Penalty:-** (1) If any vehicles, conveyance, vessel, animal etc. has been seized by any police or excise officer under the Act, then in terms of section -57B(1) of the Act, the Collector or an officer authorized by him upon receipt of an application in Form IV by the owner of the said conveyance or vehicle etc., may release the said conveyance or vehicle 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 vehicle or the owner is not coming to claim the vehicle, the Collector or the officer authorized by him, after waiting for 15 days from the date of seizure, shall proceed to confiscate and auction the vehicle as per the provisions of the Act.

(2) The penalty shall be 50% of the latest insured value of vehicle/conveyance. The insured value is the value of the vehicle as assessed by the insurance company. Where, the insured value is not available or the Collector or the officer authorized by him has reason to believe that the vehicle is undervalued, he shall get the valuation done by the District Transport Officer and 50% of that value shall be the amount of penalty.

In any case, the Collector shall not wait beyond 15 days from the date of seizure 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 vehicle or conveyance shall not be in the public interest, he shall proceed ahead with the confiscation of the said vehicle or conveyance and its subsequent auction / disposal.

(4) Where the conveyance is such that its valuation / insurance is not possible, the Collector or the officer authorized by him shall impose such fine as he deems fit. While imposing such fine, 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 and the quantum of intoxicant recovered.

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

(6) The owner of the vehicle / conveyance shall, after the release of the vehicle / conveyance, produce the vehicle/ conveyance as and when required by the authorities.

[Explanation:- **In all pending / ongoing cases of confiscation/auction of vehicles, the Collector or the officer authorized by him may give an opportunity to the existing owner to pay the aforesaid penalty and get the vehicle released. Upon satisfaction about ownership and upon payment of such penalty, the ongoing confiscation/auction proceeding may be dropped and the vehicle released.]"**

In said view of the matter, the writ petition is disposed of with liberty to petitioner to avail the remedy of the amended provision 12(A) 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 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)

veena/rajiv-

AFR/NAFR	
CAV DATE	
Uploading Date	
Transmission Date	