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IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED: 22.04.2022

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE R.PONGIAPPAN

Crl.R.C.No.526 of 2022

Thilagar @ Logamaniyathilagar

...Petitioner

versus

State By,
The Inspector of Police,
Thittachery Police Station,
Nagapattinam District.
(Crime No.646 of 2020)

...Respondent

PRAYER: Criminal Revision Petition has been filed under Sections 397 and 401 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, praying to set aside the order of the learned Principal District and Sessions Judge, Nagapattinam in Cr.M.P.No.773 of 2022 dated 04.04.2022 and further direct the respondents to return the petitioner's TATA ACE bearing registration No.TN 49 AM 2580 seized in crime No.646 of 2020 on the file of the respondent police.

For Petitioner : Mr.P.Muthamizhselvakumar

For Respondent : Mr.Leonard Arul Joseph Selvam
Government Advocate (Crl.Side)

O R D E R

The present Criminal Revision Case has been filed praying to set aside the order dated 04.04.2022 made in Cr.M.P.No.773 of 2022 on the file of the learned Principal District and Sessions Judge, Nagapattinam and further to direct the respondent to return the petitioner's TATA ACE bearing registration No.TN 49 AM 2580 seized in crime No.646 of 2020 on the file of the respondent police.

2. The petitioner is the owner of the TATA ACE bearing registration No.TN 49 AM 2580. In a case registered in Crime No.646 of 2020 under Sections 379 & 430 of IPC and Section 21(1) of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, the respondent police, while at the time of



investigation, recovered the said vehicle and as of now, the same is in the custody of the respondent police.

3. Pending investigation, the petitioner filed a petition in Cr.M.P.No.773 of 2022 before the learned Principal District and Sessions Judge, Nagapattinam, praying for return of the vehicle.

4. The learned Principal District and Sessions Judge, Nagapattinam, by order dated 04.04.2022 dismissed the said petition on the ground that if the said vehicle is released, there is a possibility of redeployment of the same for committing the same offence with another set of drivers and hence, the relief sought for by the petitioner cannot be sustained. Challenging the said dismissal order, the present revision petition has been filed.

5. The learned counsel appearing for the revision petitioner would submit that the petitioner is the owner of the vehicle and without his knowledge, only the driver of the vehicle involved in the offence and the petitioner is no way responsible for the alleged occurrence. Further, if the petition mentioned vehicle is exposed in the sunlight, the value of the vehicle become depreciated and therefore, this petition has been filed praying for return of the vehicle, by setting aside the order dated 04.04.2022 made in Cr.M.P.No.773 of 2022.

6. Per contra, the learned Government Advocate (Crl. Side) appearing for the respondent police would contend that the petitioner, who is the owner of the vehicle, is arrayed as an accused in this case. He would further submit that in respect to the petition mentioned vehicle, confiscation proceedings has to be initiated and hence, the property now stated in the petition shall not be given to the petitioner.

7. Now, on going through the rival submissions made by the learned counsel appearing on either side with relevant records, the petitioner is arrayed as an accused in the above referred case. On going through the nature of offence committed in the petition mentioned case, during the relevant point of time, the petition mentioned vehicle was used for transportation of illegal sand mining, which is violative of Section 21(1) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act. Further, the learned Government Advocate (Crl. Side) appearing for the respondent police contended that, now confiscation proceedings are initiated.



8. In this regard, it would necessary and useful to see the judgment dated 29.10.2018 passed by the Division Bench of this Court in W.P.(MD)No.19936 of 2017 wherein, it has observed as follows:

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"2.Taking note of the prevailing situation, we have passed the following order on 24.09.2018:

"We have perused the report filed by the third respondent District Collector, Pudukkottai. From the submissions made on both sides, we are satisfied that not only in the place, which is subject matter of writ petition, but also in the entire State indiscriminately mining is going on illegally by using vehicles and bullock carts. The action taken is far and few. We are afraid to say that even this is mainly restricted to only imposing of fine. The vehicles involved are either released by the official respondents or by the Courts. Every thing has become a part of the routine transaction. The action taken so far has not yielded any result. Sand in the present form takes thousands of years. Removal of the sand will lead to the destruction of the rivers. At this speed, we may lose the rivers once for all. A report of NITI Aayog - a Government Think Tank, indicates that by 2050 there will not be any water for the entire State. 21 cities including Chennai will run out of ground water affecting about 100 million people. The aforesaid situation is the stock reality borne out of the greed of the man. May be, the generation next might see water only in bottle. Day in and day out we are forced to deal with such cases. However, illegal mining goes on unchecked under our nose. This is the reality."

9. Further, in the same judgment, it has held as follows:

"7.Section 21(4) of the Act deals with the power to seize any vehicle, equipment or tool involved in illicit mining by an officer or an authority specially empowered. As per Section 21(4-A), such a vehicle, equipment, tool or mineral shall be liable to be confiscated by the order of the Court, competent to take cognizance. We may note Section 21(4-A) of the Act consciously uses the word 'shall' while dealing with confiscation. Therefore, if the Court concerned is of the view that any vehicle, mineral, tool, equipment or any other things seized, is involved with any



violation, then, it has to be followed by confiscation and disposal."

10. Now, applying the ratio laid down in the above referred judgments, herein also, when the petitioner himself is arrayed as an accused, he is not entitled to receive the petition mentioned property for interim custody. Being the reason that confiscation proceedings are now initiated, allowing this revision petition would futile the entire process of confiscation, further, Section 21 (4-A) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, reads as follows;

"Any mineral, tool, equipment, vehicle or any other thing seized under sub-section (4), shall be liable to be confiscated by an order of the Court competent to take cognizance of the offence under sub-section (1) and shall be disposed of in accordance with the directions of such Court."

11. Therefore, in the light of the above discussions stated supra, being the reason that the property recovered under the provisions of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, has to be mandatorily confiscated by an order of the Court competent to take cognizance, it would not necessary to pass a positive order in this Revision Case. Accordingly, this Criminal Revision Case is dismissed. The confiscation authority i.e. Authorised Officer is directed to complete the confiscation proceedings within three months from the date of receipt of copy of this order.

s/d-
Assistant Registrar

True Copy

Sub-Assistant Registrar

To

- 1.The Principal District and Sessions Judge,
Nagapattinam
- 2.The Inspector of Police,
Thittachery Police Station,
Nagapattinam District



3.The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.

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Cr1.R.C.No.526 of 2022

RK (CO)
SP (09/05/2022)