

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

CRM-M-3393-2022
Reserved on 10.02.2022
Pronounced on 21.02.2022

Gurdeep Singh and other ...Petitioners

Versus

State of Punjab ...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ANOOP CHITKARA

Present: Mr. Rajesh Bhateja, Advocate for
Mr. C.M. Munjal, Advocate for the petitioners.

Mr. Harsimar Singh Sitta, AAG, Punjab.

ANOOP CHITKARA, J.

FIR No.	Dated	Police Station	Sections
113	24.10.2021	Tapa Mandi	15, 25, 61, 85 of NDPS Act

1. The petitioners under arrest for violating the provisions as mentioned above of Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act), per the FIR captioned above, has come up before this Court under Section 439 CrPC seeking bail on the ground that the quantity of contraband is less than commercial and rigours of S. 37 of NDPS Act do not apply.
2. In paragraph 11 of the petition, it is declared that the accused have no criminal history.
3. Ld. Counsel for the petitioners contends that the police has wrongly clubbed recoveries from two different tractors to show it as commercial quantity and pre-trial incarceration would cause an irreversible injustice to the petitioners and family.
4. Based on the status report, Ld. counsel appearing for the State opposes the bail and submits that grant of bail encourages the drug peddlers, and the drug menace is spreading day by day.

REASONING:

5. The case of the prosecution is based on a secret information about transport of poppy husk in two tractors. After that the police spotted the tractors and, on their

search, recovered 25 kg poppy husk from each tractor. Since the informer had stated transport of poppy husk in two tractors, as such the investigator registered a single common FIR. Without going into a question that whether such seizures could not be clubbed, suffice it to say that the total quantity allegedly recovered was 50 kg of poppy husk, whereas per entry no. 110 of the table issued under sub-clause vii(a) and xxiii(a) of section 2 of the Act, poppy greater than 50 kgs falls in the category of commercial quantity. Given this, 50 kg of poppy will fall in intermediate quantity and not commercial quantity.

6. In Ratto v. State of Himachal Pradesh, 2004(1) R.C.R.(Criminal) 501, a full bench of High Court of Himachal Pradesh observed,

[1]. This matter has been referred on the following questions: -
"Whether 1 kg. Cannabis (Charas) will be commercial quantity in the face of Section 2(vii-a) of the Act, 1985, as has been held in the aforesaid two decisions of this court?"

[33]. In view of the aforesaid discussion, in our view, decisions of this Court in Mathew Andrews British National v. State of H.P., Cr. M.P.(M) No. 1492 of 2001; State v. Munshi Ram, Criminal Revision No. 140 of 2000 and Sarvjeet Singh v. State, Cr. M.P.(M) No. 1088 of 2002 (so far dealing with "commercial quantity" while cancelling the bail) do not lay the correct law, therefore, these are overruled. At the same time, while answering this reference, it is held that in order to be the "commercial quantity" as defined in Section 2(viia) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 as amended by Central Act of 2001, it has always to be more than/greater than/bigger than on kg.

7. Given above, the rigours of S. 37 of the NDPS Act do not apply in the present case.

8. Section 2 (vii-a) of the NDPS Act defines commercial quantity as the quantity greater than the quantity specified in the schedule. Section 2 (xxiii-a) defines small quantity as a quantity less than the quantity specified in the table of the NDPS Act. The remaining quantity falls in an undefined category, generally called an intermediate quantity. All Sections in the NDPS Act, which specify an offence, also mention the minimum and maximum sentence, depending upon the quantity of the substance. The commercial quantity mandates a minimum sentence of ten years of imprisonment and a minimum fine of Rupees One hundred thousand, and bail is subject to the riders mandated in S. 37 of NDPS Act. When the quantity is less than commercial, the restrictions of Section 37 of the NDPS Act will not attract, and the factors for bail become similar to the offence regular statutes.

9. In Sami Ullaha v Superintendent Narcotic Control Bureau, (2008) 16 SCC 471, the Hon'ble Supreme Court holds that in intermediate quantity, the rigors of the provisions of Section 37 may not be justified.

10. The petitioners are first offender, and one of the relevant factors would be to provide an opportunity to course-correct. Even a prima facie perusal of paragraph 3 of the bail petition needs consideration for bail.

11. In Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v State of Punjab, 1980 (2) SCC 565, (Para 30), a Constitutional Bench of Supreme Court held that the bail decision must enter the cumulative effect of the variety of circumstances justifying the grant or refusal of bail. In Kalyan Chandra Sarkar v Rajesh Ranjan @ Pappu Yadav, 2005 (2) SCC 42, (Para 18) a three-member Bench of Supreme Court held that the persons accused of non-bailable offences are entitled to bail if the Court concerned concludes that the prosecution has failed to establish a prima facie case against him, or despite the existence of a prima facie case, the Court records reasons for its satisfaction for the need to release such person on bail, in the given fact situations. The rejection of bail does not preclude filing a subsequent application. The courts can release on bail, provided the circumstances then prevailing requires, and a change in the fact situation. In State of Rajasthan v Balchand, AIR 1977 SC 2447, (Para 2 & 3), Supreme Court noticeably illustrated that the basic rule might perhaps be tersely put as bail, not jail, except where there are circumstances suggestive of fleeing from justice or thwarting the course of justice or creating other troubles in the shape of repeating offences or intimidating witnesses and the like by the petitioner who seeks enlargement on bail from the Court. It is true that the gravity of the offence involved is likely to induce the petitioner to avoid the course of justice and must weigh when considering the question of jail. So also, the heinousness of the crime. In Gudikanti Narasimhulu v Public Prosecutor, (1978) 1 SCC 240, (Para 16), Supreme Court held that the delicate light of the law favors release unless countered by the negative criteria necessitating that course. In Prahlad Singh Bhati v NCT, Delhi, (2001) 4 SCC 280, Supreme Court highlighted one of the factors for bail to be the public or the State's immense interest and similar other considerations. In Dataram Singh v State of Uttar Pradesh, (2018) 3 SCC 22, (Para 6), Supreme Court held that the grant or refusal of bail is entirely within the discretion of the judge hearing the matter and though that discretion is unfettered, it must be exercised judiciously, compassionately, and in a humane manner. Also, conditions for the grant of bail ought not to be so strict as to be incapable of compliance, thereby making the grant of bail illusory.

12. The possibility of the accused influencing the investigation, tampering with evidence, intimidating witnesses, and the likelihood of fleeing justice, can be taken care of by imposing elaborative and stringent conditions. In Sushila Aggarwal, (2020) 5 SCC 1, Para 92, the Constitutional Bench held that unusually, subject to the evidence produced, the Courts can impose restrictive conditions.

13. Without commenting on the case's merits, in the facts and circumstances peculiar to this case, and for the reasons mentioned above, the petitioners make a case for bail, subject to the following terms and conditions, which shall be over and above and irrespective of the contents of the form of bail bonds in chapter XXXIII of CrPC, 1973.

14. In Mahidul Sheikh v. State of Haryana, CRM-33030-2021 in CRA-S-363-2020, decided on 14-01-2022, Para 53, this Court observed,

[53]. The pragmatic approach is that while granting bail with sureties, the "Court" and the "Arresting Officer" should give a choice to the accused to either furnish surety bonds or to handover a fixed deposit, or direct electronic money transfer where such facility is available, or creating a lien over his bank account. The accused should also have a further option to switch between the modes. The option lies with the accused to choose between the sureties and deposits and not with the Court or the arresting officer.

15. Given above, provided the accused is not required in any other case, the petitioners shall be released on bail in the FIR mentioned above, subject to furnishing a personal bond of Rs. Ten thousand (INR 10,000/-) and shall furnish one surety of Rs. Twenty-five thousand (INR 25,000/-), to the satisfaction of the concerned Court/Judicial Magistrate having the jurisdiction over the Police Station conducting the investigation, and in case of non-availability, any nearest Ilaqa Magistrate/duty Magistrate. Before accepting the sureties, the concerned Court must satisfy that if the accused fails to appear in Court, then such surety is capable of producing the petitioners before the Court.

16. In the alternative, the petitioners may furnish a personal bond of Rs. Ten Thousand only (INR 10,000/-), and hand over to the concerned court a fixed deposit(s) for Rs. Ten Thousand only (INR 10,000/-), made in favour of Chief Judicial Magistrate of the concerned district. Said fixed deposit may be made from any of the banks where the stake of the State is more than 50%, or any of the well-established and stable private banks, with the clause of automatic renewal of the principal and the interest reverting to the linked account.

17. The fixed deposit need not necessarily be made from the applicant's account. If such a fixed deposit is made in physical form, i.e., on paper, then the original receipt shall be handed over to the concerned court. If made online, its printout, countersigned by the accused, shall be given; and the depositor shall get the online liquidation disabled. The applicant shall inform the concerned branch of the bank at the earliest that it has been tendered as surety. Such information be sent either by e-mail or by post/courier about the fixed deposit, whether made on paper or in any other mode, along with its number and FIR number. After that, the applicant shall hand over such

proof and endorsement to the concerned police station. Such court shall have a lien over the deposit until the case's closure, or discharged by substitution, or up to the expiry of the period mentioned under S. 437-A CrPC, 1973, as the case may be. Subject to the proceedings under S. 446 CrPC, the entire amount of fixed deposit, less taxes, if any, shall be endorsed/returned to the depositor.

18. It shall be the total discretion of the applicant to choose between surety bonds and fixed deposits. It shall also be open for the applicant to apply to the investigator or the concerned court to substitute fixed deposit with surety bonds and vice-versa.

19. On the reverse page of personal bonds, the attesting officer shall mention the permanent address of the petitioners along with the phone number linked with the AADHAR card, the other phone numbers (if any), and e-mail (if any). In case of any change in the above particulars, the petitioners shall immediately and not later than 30 days from such modification, intimate about the change to the concerned Police Station and the concerned Court.

20. The petitioners to also execute a bond for attendance in the concerned Court(s), as and when asked to do so. The presentation of the personal bond shall be deemed acceptance of the following and all other stipulations, terms, and conditions of this bail order.

21. The petitioners shall join the investigation as and when called by the Investigating Officer or any Superior Officer; and shall cooperate with the investigation at all further stages as might be required. In the event of failure to do so, it will be open for the prosecution to seek cancellation of the bail. Whenever the investigation occurs within the police premises, the petitioners shall not be called before 8 AM and shall be let off before 6 PM, and shall not be subjected to third-degree, indecent language, inhuman treatment, etc.

22. The petitioners shall not influence, browbeat, pressurize, make any inducement, threat, or promise, directly or indirectly, to the witnesses, the police officials, or any other person acquainted with the facts and the circumstances of the case, to dissuade them from disclosing such facts to the police, or the court, or to tamper with the evidence.

23. Within ten days of release from prison, the petitioners shall procure a smartphone and inform its IMEI number and other details to the SHO/I.O. of the Police station mentioned above. The petitioners shall always keep the phone location/GPS on the "ON" mode. Whenever the Investigating officer asks to share the location, the petitioners shall immediately do so. The petitioners shall neither clear the location

history, WhatsApp chats, call logs nor format the phone without permission of the concerned SHO/I.O. This condition shall continue till the completion of the trial or closure of case, whichever is earlier.

24. Given the nature of allegations and the other circumstances peculiar to this case, the petitioners shall surrender all weapons, firearms, ammunition, if any, along with the arms license to the concerned authority within ten days of release from prison and inform the Investigator about the compliance. However, subject to the Indian Arms Act, 1959, the petitioners shall be entitled to renew and take it back in case of acquittal in this case.

25. During the trial's pendency, if the petitioners repeat or commits any offence where the sentence prescribed is more than seven years or violates any condition as stipulated in this order, it shall always be permissible to the respondent to apply for cancellation of this bail. It shall further be open for any investigating agency to bring it to the notice of the court seized of the subsequent application that the accused was earlier cautioned not to indulge in criminal activities. Otherwise, the bail bonds shall continue to remain in force throughout the trial and after that in terms of Section 437-A of the CrPC.

26. Any Advocate for the petitioners and the Officer in whose presence the petitioners put signatures on personal bonds shall explain all conditions of this bail order in any language that the petitioners understand.

27. If the petitioners find bond amount beyond social and financial reach, it may be brought to the notice of this Court for appropriate reduction. Further, if the petitioners find bail condition(s) as violating fundamental, human, or other rights, or causing difficulty due to any situation, then for modification of such term(s), the petitioners may file a reasoned application before this Court, and after taking cognizance, even to the Court taking cognizance or the trial Court, as the case may be, and such Court shall also be competent to modify or delete any condition.

28. This order does not, in any manner, limit or restrict the rights of the Police or the investigating agency from further investigation as per law.

29. In case the Investigator/Officer-In-Charge of the concerned Police Station arraigns another section of any penal offence in this FIR, and if the new section prescribes maximum sentence which is not greater than the sections mentioned above, then this bail order shall be deemed to have also been passed for the newly added section(s). However, suppose the newly inserted sections prescribe a sentence exceeding the maximum sentence prescribed in the sections mentioned above, then, in that case, the

Investigator/Officer-In-Charge shall give the petitioners notice of a minimum of seven days providing an opportunity to avail the remedies available in law.

30. Any observation made hereinabove is neither an expression of opinion on the merits of the case nor shall the trial Court advert to these comments.

31. In return for the protection from incarceration, the Court believes that the accused shall also reciprocate through desirable behavior.

32. *There would be no need for a certified copy of this order for furnishing bonds, and any Advocate for the Petitioners can download this order along with case status from the official web page of this Court and attest it to be a true copy. In case the attesting officer wants to verify the authenticity, such an officer can also verify its authenticity and may download and use the downloaded copy for attesting bonds.*

Petition allowed in aforesaid terms. All pending applications, if any, stand disposed.

(ANOOP CHITKARA)
JUDGE

21.02. 2022
Jyoti-II

Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes
Whether reportable: No.