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

CRM-M-17645-2022
Date of decision : 29.11.2022

Parwinder Singh and another

...Petitioners

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VIKAS BAHL

Present: Mr. Deepak Aggarwal, Advocate for the petitioners.

Mr. Ramdeep Partap Singh, Sr. DAG, Punjab.

VIKAS BAHL, J. (ORAL)

Prayer in the present petition is for grant of regular bail to the petitioners in FIR No.25 dated 26.06.2021 registered under Sections 22 and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 at Police Station GRP Bathinda, District Bathinda.

Learned counsel for the petitioners has submitted that both the petitioners are in custody since 26.06.2021 and investigation is complete and challan has been presented and there are 21 prosecution witnesses, out of which, only two prosecution witnesses have been examined as yet and thus, the conclusion of trial is likely to take time. It is further submitted that none of the petitioners are involved in any other case under the NDPS Act. It is contended that there are several arguable points in the present case including the fact that the alleged recovery is not from the conscious possession of the petitioners inasmuch as even as per the FIR, it has been mentioned that a grey coloured bag, which contained the narcotic tablets, had been opened as the

zipper of the same was broken and the alleged boxes of the intoxicant vials/tablets had fallen on the floor and the same were collected from the ground by ASI with the help of other police officials. It is further contended that in such a situation, it cannot be said that the petitioners were in conscious possession of the contraband and for the said argument, the petitioners have relied upon the decision of a Coordinate Bench of this Court in CRM-M-16150-2021 dated 19.07.2021 titled as '**Balwinder Singh Vs. State of Punjab**', and on judgment in CRM-M-33733-2020 dated 15.03.2021 titled as '**Manjit Singh Vs. State of Punjab**', alongwith connected matters and also upon a judgment reported as **2019(4) RCR (Criminal) 714** titled as '**Ravi Kumar Vs. State of Punjab**'.

Learned State counsel, on the other hand, has opposed the present petition for grant of regular bail to the petitioners and has submitted that it was in the presence of the police party that the petitioners had thrown the bag containing the contraband and thus, it cannot be said that the petitioners were not in conscious possession of the intoxicants tablets. He has further pointed out that as far as petitioner No.2 is concerned, there are two other cases against him although, the same are not under the NDPS Act.

Learned counsel for the petitioners, in rebuttal to the abovesaid argument, has relied upon the judgment of Hon'ble Supreme Court in '**Maulana Mohd. Amir Rashadi vs. State of U.P. and another**', reported as **2012 (2) SCC 382** to contend that the facts and circumstances of the present case are to be seen and the bail application of the petitioner cannot be rejected solely on the ground that the petitioner is involved in another case. The relevant portion of the said judgment is reproduced hereinbelow:-

“As observed by the High Court, merely on the basis of criminal antecedents, the claim of the second respondent cannot be rejected. In other words, it is the duty of the Court to find out the role of the accused in the case in which he has been charged and other circumstances such as possibility of fleeing away from the jurisdiction of the Court etc.”

This Court has heard learned counsel for the parties and has perused the paper-book.

In **Balwinder Singh's** case (Supra), a Coordinate Bench of this Court has held as under:

“Briefly stated, case of the prosecution against the petitioner is that on 04.03.2019 police party headed by ASI Ravinder Singh on patrolling duty were coming to Tehang Octroi via Saiflabad. When they reached near Civil Hospital, Phillour they saw the petitioner coming on foot who on seeing the police party threw one heavy weight black coloured polythene bag and tried to run away. The police apprehended the petitioner and on search as per prescribed procedure recovered 55 intoxicant injections containing Buprenorphine 2 ml each and 55 injections containing Avil 10 ml each from the polythene bag.

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On the other hand, learned State Counsel has argued that the petitioner kept in his conscious possession commercial quantity of intoxicant injections. Rigors of Section 37(1)(b) are fully applicable to the case of the petitioner. The petitioner does not deserve the concession of regular bail. Therefore, the petition may be dismissed.

However learned State Counsel has conceded that the petitioner is not involved in any other case under the NDPS Act.

In CRM-M-13662-2020 titled as 'Niranjan Kumar @

Kaka Vs. State of Punjab' decided on 06.07.2020; CRM-M14474- 2020 titled as 'Dharminder Singh Vs. State of Punjab' decided on 24.06.2020; CRM-M-21020-2020 titled as 'Amritpal Singh Lamberdar Vs. State of Punjab' decided on 11.08.2020; CRMM6433-2018 titled as 'Pawan Kumar Vs. State of Punjab' decided on 23.02.2018 and CRM-M16380-2020 titled as 'Buta Singh Vs. State of Punjab' decided on 13.08.2020 where recovery of narcotic/psychotropic drug/substance was made from bag allegedly thrown on the road side by the accused, the case was considered to involve question as to whether the accused could be said to be in conscious possession thereof and the accused was granted regular bail.

In 'Chitta Biswas @ Subhash Vs. State of West Bengal' Criminal Appeal No.245 of 2020 SLP (Criminal) No.8823 of 2019 decided on 07.02.2020 where recovery of 46 bottles of phensydryl cough syrup containing codeine mixture above commercial quantity was made from the accused who was in custody since 21.07.2018 and out of 10 prosecution witnesses only 4 prosecution witnesses had been examined, the accused was granted bail by Hon'ble Supreme Court.

In the present case recovery of intoxicant injections was allegedly made from polythene bag allegedly thrown on the road side. The case involves debatable question as to whether the petitioner can be said to be in conscious possession of the contraband recovered from the polythene bag lying on the road side. The petitioner is not involved in any other case under the NDPS Act. Rigors of Section 37(1) (b) of the NDPS Act stand satisfied by due implication. Further, the petitioner is in custody since 04.03.2019. Prosecution evidence is yet to be recorded. The trial is likely to take long time due to restrictions imposed to prevent spread of Covid-19.

In view of the above referred judicial precedents and facts and circumstances of the case but without commenting on the merits of the case, I am of the considered view that the petitioner deserves the concession of regular bail.

Therefore, the petition is allowed and the petitioner is ordered to be released on regular bail on furnishing of bail bonds to the satisfaction of the trial Court/Duty Magistrate/Chief Judicial Magistrate concerned.

However, bail is granted to the petitioner subject to the condition that he will not commit any offence under the NDPS Act after his release on bail and in case of involvement of the petitioner in commission of any offence under the NDPS Act in future, his bail in the present case shall also be liable to be cancelled on application to be filed in this regard.”

A perusal of the above judgment would show that although, in the said case, the recovery effected was of commercial quantity but, since the recovery was effected after the same had been thrown on the ground, thus, it was observed that it was a debatable issue whether the petitioners could be said to be in conscious possession of the narcotic substance or not. It was also observed that the rigors of Section 37(1) (B) of the NDPS Act stood satisfied by due implication.

Even in ***Manjit Singh's*** case (supra), a Coordinate Bench of this Court dealt with a case in which, the allegation was that the petitioner therein was holding a polythene bag and on seeing the police party, he threw the said polythene bag. It was observed that it was not possible to conclude that whether the recovery effected was made from the conscious possession of the petitioner therein or not. The said case was also a case of commercial quantity.

Before advertng to the facts of the present case, it would relevant to note the various judgments of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and High Court granting bail in cases involving commercial quantity. In CRMM-20177- 2020, titled as **Vipan Sood** vs. **State of Punjab**, a Co-ordinate Bench of this Court granted regular bail to an accused who was involved in a case wherein recovery was of 3.8 kgs of “charas” (commercial quantity) after being in custody for 1 year and 7 months. The said order was upheld by the Hon'ble Supreme Court vide order dated 24.08.2021 in a Petition for Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No.5852/2021 titled as “**Narcotic Control Bureau v. Vipan Sood and another**”.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India vide order dated 12.10.2020 passed in Criminal Appeal No.668 of 2020 titled as “**Amit Singh @ Moni v. Himachal Pradesh**” was pleased to grant regular bail in a case involving 3 kg and 800 grams of “charas” primarily on the ground of substantial custody and also, the fact that the trial would likely take time to conclude.

In Criminal Appeal No.827 of 2021 titled as **Mukarram Hussain v. State of Rajasthan and another**, the Hon'ble Apex Court vide judgment dated 16.8.2021 was also pleased to grant bail wherein the quantity of the contraband was commercial in nature.

A Co-ordinate Bench of this Court in CRM-M 10343 of 2021 titled as **Ajay Kumar @ Nannu v. State of Punjab and other** connected matters, vide Order dated 31.03.2021, after taking into consideration the stipulations of Section 37 of the NDPS Act, was pleased to grant regular bail in a case involving commercial quantity and a condition was imposed on the

petitioner therein while granting the said bail and the said condition was incorporated in para 21 of the said judgment, which reads as under:

“21. However, the petitioners are granted regular bail subject to the condition that they shall not commit any offence under the NDPS Act after their release on bail and in case of commission of any such offence by them after their release on bail, their bail in the present case shall also be liable to be cancelled on application to be filed by the prosecution in this regard.”

Further, a Division Bench of this Court vide judgment dated 31.08.2021 passed in CRM-8262-2021 in CRA-S-3721-SB of 2015 titled as, **Harpal Singh v. National Investigating Agency and another**, granted suspension of sentence in a case where the recovery was of commercial quantity. In the above-mentioned order, the Division Bench had taken into consideration the right vested with an accused person/convict under Article 21 of the Constitution of India with regard to speedy trial. Further, the judgment of Hon'ble the Supreme Court in **State (NCT of Delhi) v. Lokesh Chadha**; (2021) 5 SCC 724 was also taken into account and the provisions of Section 37 of NDPS Act were considered and the sentence of the applicant-appellant therein was suspended after primarily considering the period of custody of the applicant-appellant therein and also the fact that the appeal was not likely to be heard in near future. Reference in the order was also made to the Division Bench judgment of this Court in Daler Singh v. State of Punjab; 2007 (1) R.C.R. (Criminal) 316 and the view taken in Daler Singh's case (supra) was reiterated and followed. In the above said judgment, it was also noticed that the grounds for regular bail stand on a better footing than that of suspension of sentence, which is after conviction.

In the present case, both the petitioners are in custody since 26.06.2021 and investigation is complete and challan has been presented and out of 21 prosecution witnesses, only two prosecution witnesses have been examined and thus, the conclusion of trial is likely to take time. None of the petitioners are stated to be involved in any other case under the NDPS Act. The question, whether the recovery of the intoxicant tablets from the bag, which was allegedly been carried by the petitioners and was opened as the zipper of the same was broken and the tablets had fallen on the ground and were collected by ASI with the help of other police officials from the ground, could be stated to be from the conscious possession of the petitioners or not, would be a matter of debate, which would be finally adjudicated during the course of the trial. Keeping in view of the law laid down in the aforesaid judgments, moreso in the case of **Balwinder Singh's** case (supra), as well as in the case of **Manjit Singh's** case (supra), it is apparent that the same is a strong arguable point in favour of the petitioners and has been considered as a point to overcome the rigors of Section 37 of the NDPS Act. Moreover, this Court purposes to impose such conditions that would meet the object of Section 37 of the NDPS Act.

Keeping in view the above-said facts and circumstances, the present petition is allowed and the petitioners are ordered to be released on bail on their furnishing bail / surety bonds to the satisfaction of the concerned trial Court/ Duty Magistrate and subject to them not being required in any other case.

The petitioners shall also abide by the following conditions:-

1. The petitioners will not tamper with the evidence during the trial.

2. The petitioners will not pressurize/intimidate the prosecution witness (s).
3. The petitioners will appear before the trial Court on the date fixed, unless their personal presence are exempted.
4. The petitioners shall not commit an offence similar to the offence of which they are accused of, or for commission of which they are suspected.
5. The petitioners shall not directly or indirectly make any inducement, threat or promise to any person acquainted with the facts of the case so as to dissuade him from disclosing such facts to the Court or to any police officer or tamper with the evidence.

In case of breach of any of the above conditions, the prosecution shall be at liberty to move an application for cancellation of bail before this Court.

Nothing stated above shall be construed as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case and the trial would proceed independently of the observations made in the present case which are only for the purpose of adjudicating the present bail application.

29.11.2022

Pawan

**(VIKAS BAHL)
JUDGE**

Whether speaking/reasoned:-

Yes/No

Whether reportable:-

Yes/No