

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-23083-2020
Reserved on: 05.09.2022
Pronounced on: 16.09.2022

Komal Preeti Gupta @ Komal @ PreetiPetitioner

Versus

State of Punjab ...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ANOOP CHITKARA

Present: Mr. Jitender Singh Dadwal, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr. Harsimar Singh Sitta, DAG, Punjab.

ANOOP CHITKARA, J.

FIR No.	Dated	Police Station	Sections
77	25.06.2020	Special Task Force, District STF Wing, SAS Nagar, Mohali	21, 29 of NDPS Act

1. The petitioner 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 Cr.P.C. seeking interim regular bail.

2. In paragraph 15 of the bail petition, the accused declares that she has no criminal antecedents.

3. On 25th June 2020, the police received a secret information that the petitioner and her husband Naman Gupta sell heroin and are travelling in a scooty, and have drugs with them. Based on this information, after complying with the procedures of NDPS Act and Cr.P.C., the police noticed the scooty, driven by a male, and a female was sitting on the pillion rider. On seeing the police, the driver became perplexed and tried to flee; however, he was caught. After following the procedures, the police searched the scooty and underneath its seat, the police recovered 810 grams of heroin. After that, the police arrested the said male and the petitioner, who was the pillion rider.

4. Ld. Counsel for the petitioner contends that the pre-trial incarceration would cause an irreversible injustice to the petitioner and family.

5. While opposing the bail, the contention on behalf of the State is that the quantity

of contraband involved in the case falls in the commercial category.

REASONING:

6. The substance involved in the present case is Heroin [Diacetyl morphine], and weighs 810 grams. The entry no. 56 of the table specifying small and commercial quantities, specifies the quantity greater than 250 grams as commercial quantity and lesser than 5 grams as small. The quantity allegedly involved in this case is commercial. Given this, the rigours of S. 37 of the NDPS Act apply in the present case. The burden is on the petitioner to satisfy the twin conditions put in place by the Legislature under Section 37 of the NDPS Act.

7. The bike driver had become perplexed on seeing the police, and had tried to flee. Further the bag containing intoxicating substance was lying underneath the seat of the scooty, and being a driver, Naman Gupta had the dominion and possession over it, and the presumption of possession would also be on the person who had the vehicle's keys. The petitioner was the pillion rider and was travelling with her husband, which is normal and not unusual. Simply because the secret information also mentioned her name, would not be ground to deny bail because the name of such informer is not revealed because of the confidentiality of such sources. Apart from this, the petitioner is a woman aged 26, and is incarcerated since June 25, 2020.

8. On the foundations of Article 15 of the Constitution of India, the legislature carved out exceptions to uplift women and children under the first proviso to section 437 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, for a person below sixteen years of age, woman, sick and infirm, to meet the objectives of social justice as enshrined in India's Constitution.

9. In *Maqsoodan v. State of Haryana*, (2002) 10 SCC 97, Supreme Court granted anticipatory bail on the facts of the case, coupled with the fact that the accused was a woman, and involved in a relatively less serious offence.

10. In *Lingaram Kodopi v. State of Chhattisgarh*, (2014) 3 SCC 474, Hon'ble Supreme granted bail to a woman by holding as follows:

[15]. On the basis of the aforesaid orders, both the appellants are on bail with the condition that they would not enter the State of Chhattisgarh during this period. Other two accused persons have already been granted bail. Charges are yet to be framed. Soni Sori is having medical problems as well. There are certain circumstances, pleaded by the appellants, and if ultimately established, there may be a possibility of proving the innocence of the appellants. Soni Sori has lost her husband and has to look after her children who are of tender ages. Lingaram Kodopi, who is a young man of 24 years, claims to be genuinely attempting to establish himself as a good citizen in the society.

Taking into consideration all these circumstances cumulatively and going by the past history, as demonstrated by both the Counsel for the appellants, we are of the opinion that the appellants deserve to be enlarged on bail during the pendency of trial on furnishing personal securities in the sum of L 50,000/- with two sureties each of the like amount, to the satisfaction of the Trial Court.

[16]. At the same time, we agree with Mr. Mohta that there should be some stringent conditions for grant of bail to the appellants. Accordingly, we order that it would be subject to the condition that the appellants shall report to the concerned police station once a week i.e. at 10.30 a.m. on every Monday to show their presence. They would be permitted to take along their lawyer. Further, they shall appear before the Trial Court on each and every date of hearing and shall not seek exemption except when on a particular date they are unable to appear because of the reasons beyond their control, like illness etc. They shall also inform the Court about their place of stay/residence and disclose to the Court as to when there is a change of residence. Further, they shall not leave the station or travel abroad without the prior permission of the trial court.

11. Regarding the rigors of section 37 of NDPS Act, it shall be apt to refer the pronouncement by this court in *Abida v. State of Haryana*, CRM-M-5077-2022, decided on 13-05-2022, wherein this court had observed as follows:

[10]. Thus, both the twin conditions need to be satisfied before a person accused of possessing a commercial quantity of drugs or psychotropic substance is to be released on bail. The first condition is to provide an opportunity to the Public Prosecutor, enabling to take a stand on the bail application. The second stipulation is that the Court must be satisfied that reasonable grounds exist for believing that the accused is not guilty of such offence, and is not likely to commit any offence while on bail. If either of these two conditions is not met, the ban on granting bail operates. The expression “reasonable grounds” means something more than prima facie grounds. It contemplates substantial probable causes for believing that the accused is not guilty of the alleged offence. Even on fulfilling one of the conditions, the reasonable grounds for believing that the accused is not guilty of such an offence, the Court still cannot give a finding on assurance that the accused is not likely to commit any such crime again. Thus, the grant of bail or denial of bail for possessing commercial quantity would vary from case to case, depending upon its facts.

[30]. From the summary of the law relating to rigors of S.37 of NDPS Act, while granting bail involving commercial quantities, the following fundamental principles emerge:

(a). In case of inconsistency, S. 37 of the NDPS Act prevails over S. 439 CrPC. [*Narcotics Control Bureau v Kishan Lal*, 1991 (1) SCC 705, Para 6].

(b). The limitations on granting of bail come in only when the question of granting bail arises on merits. [*Customs, New Delhi v. Ahmadaliev Nodira*, (2004) 3 SCC 549, Para 7].

(c). The provisions of Section 37 of the NDPS Act provide the legal norms which have to be applied in determining whether a case for grant of bail has been made out. [UOI v. Prateek Shukla, (2021) 5 SCC 430, Para 12].

(d). In case the Court proposes to grant bail, two conditions are to be mandatorily satisfied in addition to the standard requirements under the provisions of the CrPC or any other enactment. [Union of India v. Niyazuddin&Anr, (2018) 13 SCC 738, Para 7].

(e). Apart from granting opportunity to the Public Prosecutor, the other twin conditions which really have relevance are the Court's satisfaction that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accused is not guilty of the alleged offence. [N.R. Mon v. Md. Nasimuddin, (2008) 6 SCC 721, Para 9].

(f). The satisfaction contemplated regarding the accused being not guilty has to be more than prima facie grounds, considering substantial probable causes for believing and justifying that the accused is not guilty of the alleged offence. [Customs, New Delhi v. AhmadalievaNodira, (2004) 3 SCC 549, Para 7].

(g). The reasonable belief contemplated in the provision requires existence of such facts and circumstances as are sufficient in themselves to justify satisfaction that the accused is not guilty of the alleged offence. [State of Kerala v. Rajesh, AIR 2020 SC 721, Para 21].

(h). Twin conditions of S. 37 are cumulative and not alternative. [Customs, New Delhi v. AhmadalievaNodira, (2004) 3 SCC 549, Para 7].

(i). At the bail stage, it is neither necessary nor desirable to weigh the evidence meticulously to arrive at a positive finding as to whether or not the accused has committed an offence under the NDPS Act and further that he is not likely to commit an offence under the said Act while on bail. [Union of India v. Rattan Mallik @ Habul, (2009) 2 SCC 624, Para 14].

(j). If the statements of the prosecution witnesses are believed, then they would not result in a conviction. [Babua v. State of Orissa, (2001) 2 SCC 566, Para 3].

(k). Merely recording the submissions of the parties does not amount to an indication of a judicial mind or a judicious application of mind. [UOI v. Prateek Shukla, (2021) 5 SCC 430, Para 12].

(l). Section 37 departs from the long-established principle of presumption of innocence in favour of an accused person until proved otherwise. [Union of India v. Sanjeev v. Deshpande, (2014) 13 SCC 1, Para 5].

(m). While considering the application for bail concerning Section 37, the Court is not called upon to record a finding of

not guilty. [Union of India v. Shiv Shanker Kesari, (2007) 7 SCC 798, Para 11].

(n). The confessional statement recorded under Section 67 of the NDPS Act is inadmissible in the trial of an offence under the NDPS Act. [Tofan Singh v. State of Tamil Nadu, (2021) 4 SCC 1]

(o). In the absence of clarity on the quantitative analysis of the samples from the laboratory, the prosecution cannot be heard to state at this preliminary stage that the accused possessed a commercial quantity of psychotropic substances as contemplated under the NDPS Act. [Bharat Chaudhary v. Union of India, 2021 SCC OnLine SC 1235, Para 10].

(p). When there is evidence of conscious possession of commercial quantity of psychotropic substances, such accused is not entitled to bail given Section 37 of the Act as contemplated under the NDPS Act. [State by (NCB) Bengaluru v. Pallulabid Ahmad Arimutta, 2022 SCC OnLine SC 47, Para 12].

(p). Bail must be subject to stringent conditions. [Sujit Tiwari v. State of Gujarat, 2020 SCC Online SC 84, Para 12].

[31]. Satisfying the fetters of S. 37 of the NDPS Act is candling the infertile eggs. The stringent conditions of section 37 placed in the statute by the legislature do not create a bar for bail for specified categories, including the commercial quantity; however, it creates hurdles by placing a reverse burden on the accused, and once crossed, the rigors no more subsist, and the factors for bail become similar to the bail petitions under general penal statutes like IPC.

12. Regarding the second rider of S. 37, this court will put very stringent conditions in this order to ensure that the petitioner does not repeat the offence.

13. 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.

14. Without commenting on the case's merits, in the facts and circumstances peculiar to this case, and for the reasons mentioned above, the petitioner makes a case for interim 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.

15. In Mahidul Sheikh v. State of Haryana, CRM-33030-2021 in CRA-S-363-2020, decided on 14-01-2022, Para 53, [Law Finder Doc Id # 1933969], 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.

16. A perusal of the bail petition and prayer clause reveal that the petitioner is seeking interim bail not regular bail. Given above, the petitioner shall be released on interim bail in the FIR mentioned above till 31.10.2022, 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 petitioner before the Court.

17. In the alternative, the petitioner 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.

18. 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 Cr.P.C., 1973, as the case may be. Subject to the proceedings under S. 446 Cr.P.C., the entire amount of fixed deposit, less taxes, if any, shall be endorsed/returned to the depositor.

19. 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.

20. On the reverse page of personal bonds, the attesting officer shall mention the permanent address of the petitioner 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 petitioner shall immediately and not later than 30 days from such modification, intimate about the change to the concerned Police Station and the concerned Court.

21. The petitioner 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.

22. The petitioner 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 fifteen days of release from prison, the petitioner shall procure a smartphone and inform its IMEI number and other details to the SHO/I.O. of the Police station mentioned above. The petitioner shall always keep the phone location/GPS on the "ON" mode. Whenever the Investigating officer asks to share the location, the petitioner shall immediately do so. The petitioner 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 period of bail.

24. During the aforesaid period, if the petitioner repeats 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 remain in force throughout the aforesaid period and after that in Section 437-A of the Cr.P.C., if not canceled due to non-appearance or breach of conditions.

25. The conditions mentioned above imposed by this court are to endeavour that the accused does not repeat the offence and to ensure the safety of the society. In Mohammed Zubair v. State of NCT of Delhi, Writ Petition (Criminal) No 279 of 2022, Para 29, decided on July 20, 2022, A Three-Judge bench of Hon'ble Supreme Court

holds that “The bail conditions imposed by the Court must not only have a nexus to the purpose that they seek to serve but must also be proportional to the purpose of imposing them. The courts while imposing bail conditions must balance the liberty of the accused and the necessity of a fair trial. While doing so, conditions that would result in the deprivation of rights and liberties must be eschewed.”

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

27. If the petitioner finds bond amount beyond social and financial reach, it may be brought to the notice of this Court for appropriate reduction. Further, if the petitioner finds 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 petitioner 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. 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.

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

31. *There would be no need for a certified copy of this order for furnishing bonds, and any Advocate for the Petitioner 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.*

Petitioner shall surrender in the concerned jail on 01.11.2022 upto 04 p.m.

Petition allowed in aforesaid terms. Liberty reserved to file an application for regular bail. All pending applications, if any, stand disposed.

16.09.2022
Jyoti-II

(ANOOP CHITKARA)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned:

Yes

Whether reportable:

No.