



W.P. (MD) No. 3421 of 2023

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 21.02.2023

C O R A M

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE P.D.AUDIKEAVALU

W.P. (MD) No. 3421 of 2023

R.Ragupathi

... Petitioner

Vs.

1.The Regional Transport Officer,
Transport Department,
Madurai District.

2.The Motor Vehicle Inspector,
Regional Transport Office,
Mattuthavani, (Karpaga Nagar),
Madurai District.

3.The Inspector of Police,
Melur Police Station,
Madurai District.
(Crime No. 6 / 2023)

... Respondents

PRAYER: Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the constitution of India, to issue a Writ of Mandamus, to direct the respondents to forthwith return the petitioner's original driving license bearing DL No.TN-59-20080007297 to him within a time limit that may be fixed by this Court.



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For Petitioner : Mr. M.Chandrabose
For Respondents : Mr. D.Gandhiraj (for R1 & R2)
Special Government Pleader
Ms. M.Aasha (for R3)
Government Advocate

ORDER

Heard Mr. M.Chandrabose, Learned Counsel for the Petitioner, Mr. D.Gandhiraj, Learned Special Government Pleader, who takes notice for the First and Second Respondents and Ms. M.Aasha, Learned Government Advocate, who takes notice for the Third Respondent and perused the materials placed on record, apart from the pleadings of the parties.

2. The Petitioner is a driver in the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (Madurai) Limited and while on duty, the bus bearing Registration No. TN-58-W-1942 driven by him had on 04.01.2023 met with an accident. According to the Petitioner, the Police Officer, who is investigating that accident, had seized the driving licence of the Petitioner and forwarded it to the First Respondent, who is the Licensing Authority, and

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the Petitioner had made representation dated 27.01.2023 to return the same, but as no action has been taken thereon, he has filed this Writ Petition.

3. Learned Special Government Pleader appearing for the First and Second Respondents has brought to notice that following the recommendations made by the Committee on Road Safety appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India (F. No. 05/2014/CoRS-Part-III dated 18.08.2015), show cause notice dated 31.01.2023 has been sent to the Petitioner, who would have to submit his explanation for the same within a period of ten days from the date of its receipt, and thereafter orders would be passed by the First Respondent in the matter.

4. At this juncture, it must be noticed that certain amendments have been made to the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, (hereinafter referred to as 'the Act' for short), which have come into force with effect from 01.09.2019 onwards and clause (4) in Section 206 and clause (1-A) in Section 19 have been inserted to the Act, which have bearing to the contentions raised in the Writ Petition and read as follows:-



"206. Power of police officer to impound document:-

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(4) A police officer or other person authorised in this behalf by the State Government shall, if he has reason to believe that the driver of a motor vehicle has committed, an offence under any of Sections 183, 184, 185, 189, 190, 194-C, 194-D or 194-E, seize the driving licence held by such driver and forward it to the licensing authority for disqualification or revocation proceedings under Section 19:

Provided that the person seizing the licence shall give to the person surrendering the licence a temporary acknowledgement therefor, but such acknowledgement shall not authorise the holder to drive until the licence has been returned to him."

"19. Power of licensing authority to disqualify from holding a driving licence or revoke such licence:-

....

(1-A) Where a licence has been forwarded to the licensing authority under sub-section (4) of Section 206, the licensing



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authority, if satisfied after giving the holder of the driving licence an opportunity of being heard, may either discharge the holder of a driving licence or, it may for detailed reasons recorded in writing, make an order disqualifying such person from holding or obtaining any licence to drive all or any class or description of vehicles specified in the licence:-

- (a) for a first offence, for a period of three months;*
- (b) for a second or subsequent offence, with revocation of the driving licence of such person:*

Provided that where a driving licence is revoked under this Section, the name of the holder of such driving licence may be placed in the public domain in such manner as may be prescribed by the Central Government."

It is evident on plain reading of the said provisions that the Licensing Authority has to record detailed reasons in writing after giving opportunity of personal hearing to the concerned holder of the driving licence for having arrived at the conclusion to either discharge or disqualifying him from holding the driving licence. That apart, on a conspectus analysis of clause (4) of Section 206 of the Act, which mandates that after seizure of licence by the



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Police Officer, its holder shall not be authorized to drive until it had been returned to him, and clause (1-A)(a) of Section 19 of the Act, which envisages disqualifying a person from holding a licence to drive vehicles for a first offence for a period of three months, it would necessarily follow that in the event of the Licensing Authority arriving at the conclusion that penalty of suspension of licence has to be imposed for the first offence, it cannot be for a period beyond three months from the actual date on which the driving licence has been seized from its holder by the Police Officer after the occurrence of accident.

5. In view of the foregoing discussion, this Court without expressing any view on the merits of controversy involved, passes the following order:-

- (i) the Petitioner shall submit his explanation to the show cause notice dated 31.01.2023 issued to him within ten days from the date of its receipt;
- (ii) the Licensing Authority shall immediately consider the explanation submitted by the Petitioner for the show cause notice dated 31.01.2023 issued to him;
- (iii) if any other details or supporting documents are necessary, the



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deficiencies in that regard shall be informed in writing by the Licensing Authority to the Petitioner requiring the same to be furnished within 2 clear working days from the date of its receipt by him;

- (iv) an enquiry shall be conducted thereafter affording full opportunity of personal hearing to the Petitioner to explain his position in that regard;
- (v) a reasoned order shall be passed dealing with each of the contentions raised on merits and in accordance with law and the decision taken communicated under written acknowledgment;
- (vi) in the event that the First Respondent is not able to pass final orders within the period of three months from the actual date of seizure of the driving licence of the Petitioner by the Police Officer if it is the first offence, the driving licence of the Petitioner shall be then returned to him with endorsement to the effect that the Petitioner shall not be precluded from driving the vehicles for which he is otherwise authorized from that date onwards, subject to the result of the proceedings in which final orders would follow later; and
- (vii) the First Respondent shall file report of such compliance before the Registrar (Judicial) of the Court.



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6. In the result, the Writ Petition is disposed on the aforesaid terms. No costs.

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NCC : Yes/No
Index : Yes/No
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To

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P.D.AUDIKESAVALU,J.

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