



W.P(MD)No.4698 of 2023

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BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 03.03.2023

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE G.R.SWAMINATHAN

W.P(MD)No.4698 of 2023

Sathish

... Petitioner

Vs

1.The District Supply Officer,
Collectorate Complex,
Thoothukudi District.

2.The Inspector of Police,
Civil Supplies C.I.D,
Thoothukudi Unit,
Madurai.
In Crime No.212 of 2022.

3.The District Revenue Officer,
Thoothukudi,
Thoothukudi District.

... Respondents

Prayer: Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying to issue a Writ of Mandamus, directing the respondents herein to forth with to release petitioner's Ashok Leyland Lorry bearing Registration No. KL-04-Y-9666 from their custody on the basic of petitioner representation dated 01.03.2023.



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For Petitioner : Mr.K.Sathish Kumar
For Respondents : Mr.G.Suriyananth
Additional Government Pleader
for R.1 & R.3

Mr.B.Thanga Aravindh
Government Advocate (Criminal Side)
for R.2

ORDER

Heard the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner, the learned Additional Government Pleader appearing for the respondents 1 and 3 and the learned Government Advocate (Criminal Side) appearing for the second respondent.

2. The petition mentioned vehicle was seized in connection with Crime No.212 of 2022 registered on the file of the second respondent.

3. The petition mentioned vehicle is presently in the custody of the second respondent. The vehicle is said to have been used for illegally transporting PDS rice.

4. It is of course open to the respondent authority to initiate confiscation proceedings. In this case, we are concerned only with the issue of granting interim custody of the vehicle to the petitioner.



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5. No purpose will be served in keeping the vehicle under the custody of the respondents. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in the decision reported in (2002) 10 SCC 283 (Sunderbhai Ambalal Desai and Others V. State of Gujarat) has held as follows:-

“17.In our view, whatever be the situation, it is of no use to keep such seized vehicles at the police stations for a long period. It is for the Magistrate to pass appropriate orders immediately by taking appropriate bond and guarantee as well as security for return of the said vehicles, if required at any point of time. This can be done pending hearing of applications for return of such vehicles.

6. Therefore, the second respondent is directed to grant interim custody of the said vehicle to the petitioner subject to the following conditions:-

a) The petitioner shall pay a sum of Rs.7,500/- (Rupees Seven Thousand and Five Hundred only) towards cost in the bank Account Number of the Chairman, District Legal Services Authority, Srivilliputhur (Ac No.233302000000100, IFSC Code – IOBA0002333), Indian Overseas Bank, Athikulam, Senkulam). It will be a non-refundable payment.



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b)The learned Principal District Judge, Virudhunagar is directed to withdraw the aforesaid deposited amount and spend the same for the welfare of Lalitha, the captive elephant now in the custody of the Forest Department, Virudhunagar. It can be towards the purchase of nutritious diet / medicines / Mahouts' salary or any other measure for the benefit of the elephant.

c) The petitioner shall not alienate or encumber the vehicle till the proceedings are completed.

d) The petitioner shall produce all the documents pertaining to the ownership of the seized vehicle. If the petitioner is an agreement holder, he can produce the relevant xerox copies.

e) As and when the respondents call for the vehicle for enquiry, the petitioner has to produce the vehicle in question and he shall cooperate with the enquiry to be conducted by the respondents.

7. The petitioner's counsel submits that the petitioner's name is not figuring in the R.C.Book, because he is only an agreement holder. The original documents are with the financier. The respondents nevertheless are directed to return the same to the petitioner upon fulfilment of the conditions.



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8. Upon completion of these formalities, the respondents shall grant interim custody of the vehicle forthwith to the petitioner without any delay. If this undertaking given by the petitioner is breached, the petitioner will not be entitled to interim custody of the vehicle in future. The Writ Petition is allowed accordingly. I make it clear that allowing of this writ petition will not have any bearing on the confiscation proceedings that may be initiated by the authorities. There shall be no order as to costs.

03.03.2023

Index : Yes / No
Internet : Yes / No
NCC : Yes / No
MGA

Note: Issue Order Copy on 06.03.2023.

To

- 1.The District Supply Officer,
Collectorate Complex,
Thoothukudi District.
- 2.The Inspector of Police,
Civil Supplies C.I.D,
Thoothukudi Unit,
Madurai.
- 3.The District Revenue Officer,
Thoothukudi,
Thoothukudi District.

Copy to:-

The Principal District Judge, Virudhunagar.



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G.R.SWAMINATHAN, J.

MGA

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