



WP (MD) No.16112 of 2023

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED: 21.07.2023

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE B.PUGALENDHI

WP(MD)No.16112 of 2023

and

WMP(MD)Nos.13500 and 13503 of 2023

Vinoth Senthilkumar

... Petitioner

Vs

1.The Regional Passport Officer,
Office of the Regional Passport Office,
Tiruchirappalli.

2.The Superintendent of Police,
Thanjavur.

3.The Inspector of Police,
Thanjavur Taluk Police Station,
Thanjavur District.

... Respondents

PRAYER: Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India for issuance of a writ of certiorarified mandamus to call for the impugned clarification under Letter Ref.No.SCN/312554779/22, dated 02.05.2022 issued by the 1st respondent and to quash the same as unwarranted and unlawful and further direct the 1st respondent herein to issue passport under File No.TR1064036362122 to the petitioner herein within a time frame as fixed by this Court.



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For petitioner : Mr.A.S.Krishnan
For Respondent : Mr.M.Rajendran,
Nos.1 and 2 Central Government Standing Counsel
For Respondent : Mr.P.Kottaichamy
No.3 Government Advocate

ORDER

The petitioner's application for grant of passport has not been considered by the 1st respondent/ the Passport Officer, on the ground that an FIR is pending as against this petitioner.

2.The learned Counsel for the petitioner submits that the petitioner has made an application for grant of passport on 15.03.2022. However the petitioner's application has not been considered by the 1st respondent so far. Therefore, this writ petition is filed.

3.The learned Counsel for the 1st respondent submits that a case in Crime No.346 of 2021 is pending as against the petitioner on the file of the Thanjavur Taluk Police Station, Thanjavur District.



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4. Pendency of an FIR, by itself, cannot be a ground to refuse the passport.

The Passport Authority can refuse the passport and any travel documents under Section 6 of the Passport Act, 1967. Section 6(2)(F) of the Act would be relevant and the same is extracted as under:-

“6. Refusal of passports, travel documents, etc-

...

(2) Subject to the other provisions of this Act, the passport authority shall refuse to issue a passport or travel document for visiting any foreign country under clause (c) of sub-section (2) of section 5 on any one or more of the following grounds, and on no other ground, namely -

...

(f) that proceedings in respect of an offence alleged to have been committed by the applicant are pending before a Criminal Court in India.”

5. The above provision enables the Passport Authority to refuse the passport or travel document to an applicant on the ground that proceedings in respect of an offence alleged to have been committed by the applicant is pending before a Criminal Court. Registration of an FIR on the police files, based on a complaint, cannot be construed as a proceedings pending before the Criminal Court.



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6.The role of the Court pending the investigation has been discussed by various Courts. In ***W.Jaihar William v. State of Tamil Nadu [2014 (2) CWC 684]***, this Court has held as follows:-

“8. ... It is well settled legal principle that mere pendency of FIR cannot be construed as pendency of criminal proceedings in respect of the offences alleged to have been committed by the applicant before the Criminal Court. Only after the Court takes cognizance of the offence alleged to have been committed by the applicant, as stipulated under Section 190 of Cr.PC., it can be construed as 'proceedings pending before the Court'”

7.A Division Bench of this Court in ***Arumugam v. Regional Passport Officer, Madurai [W.A(MD)No.301 of 2018, dated 27.03.2018]***, has held as follows:-

“8. ... mere pendency of the criminal proceedings cannot be construed as pendency of the criminal proceedings. The decisions relied on for reaching the said conclusion in the above cited decision, would also disclose that unless cognizance is taken by the concerned Magistrate, it does not amount to pendency of the criminal proceedings. Admittedly, in the case on hand, the case is in FIR stage and even for the sake of arguments, subsequently, the charge sheet has been filed, as on the date of submission of the application for passport, only FIR is pending and it cannot be construed as pendency of a criminal case and



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it cannot be said that the petitioner has suppressed the material fact of pendency of the criminal case.”

8. In fact, the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, has issued a Circular dated 10.10.2019, wherein, the following instruction was issued:-

“5. In view of the above, the following instructions may be adopted while processing the passport applications in respect of those applicants who may have criminal proceedings pending before a criminal court in India:

...

(vi) ... It may be noted that mere filing of FIRs and cases under investigation do not come under the purview of Section 6(2) (f) and that criminal proceedings would only be considered pending against an applicant if a case has been registered before any Court of law and the court has taken cognizance of the same.”

Therefore, the Passport Authority is not justified in not deciding the application filed by the petitioner for passport by referring the criminal case.

9. Ordinarily, the duration of a passport as per Rule 12 of the Passport Rules is for a period of 10 years. In the event if the applicant is facing any criminal proceedings, the passport may be issued by restricting the period.



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10. Accordingly, this writ petition is allowed with a direction to the Passport Authority to issue passport to this petitioner, by considering his application, within a period of twelve weeks from the date of receipt of a copy of this order. No costs. Consequently connected miscellaneous petitions are closed.

21.07.2023

dsk

To

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B.PUGALENDHI, J.

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