



WP(MD)No.22724 of 2023

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

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DATED : 19.09.2023

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE B.PUGALENDHI

WP(MD)No.22724 of 2023

P.Ramesh

... Petitioner

v.

1.The Passport Officer,
Passport Office,
Bharathi Ula Street,
Race Course Road,
Madurai – 625 002.

2.The Inspector of Police,
South Thamaraikulam Police Station,
Kanyakumari District.

... Respondents

Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India seeking issuance of a Writ of Mandamus directing the first respondent to issue passport to the petitioner by considering his application in No.MD2065606540723 dated 24.07.2023 within a stipulated time limit.



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For Petitioner : Mr.P.Rengaraju

For Respondents : Mr.K.Ashok Kumar Ram,
Central Government Standing Counsel
for R.1

Mr.P.Kottaichamy,
Government Advocate (Crl. Side)
for R.2

ORDER

The petitioner's application for passport was not considered by the Passport Authority, on the ground that a criminal proceeding is pending as against him before the Criminal Court.

2.Learned Government Advocate (Crl. Side), on instructions, submitted that the petitioner has involved in a case in Crime No.99 of 2013 and in Crime No.253 of 2017. In respect of the case in Crime No.99 of 2013, the petitioner was acquitted. In respect of the case in Crime No.253 of 2017, the



investigation was completed and after investigation, charge sheet was also filed before the learned Judicial Magistrate III, Nagercoil, however, the same is yet to be taken on file.

3.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.”



4.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.

5.Similarly, unless and until the Court takes cognizance of the final report filed by the Investigative Agency, it cannot be termed as a proceedings pending before the Criminal Court. ***In Re Narsingh Das Tapadia v. Goverdhan Das Partani & Another [(2000) 7 SCC 183]***, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has observed as follows:-

“8."Taking cognizance of an offence" by the Court has to be distinguished from the filing of the complaint by the complainant. Taking cognizance would mean the action taken by the court for initiating judicial proceedings against the offender in respect of the offence regarding which the complaint is filed. Before it can be said that any Magistrate or Court has taken cognizance of an offence it must be shown that he has applied his mind to the facts for the

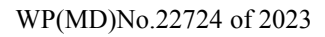


purpose of proceeding further in the matter at the instance of the complainant. If the Magistrate or the Court is shown to have applied the mind not for the purpose of taking action upon the complaint but for taking some other kind of action contemplated under the Code Criminal Procedure such as ordering investigation under Section 156(3) or issuing a search warrant, he cannot be said to have taken cognizance of the offence.”

6.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. ... ”

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



“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.”

8. 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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9. Accordingly, this writ petition is disposed of 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.

Index : Yes / No
NCC : Yes / No
Internet : Yes
gk

19.09.2023

To

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B.PUGALENDHI, J.

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