

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

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CRM-M-22847-2022 (O&M)

Date of decision: 24.02.2023

MUSTAQ AHMED

....Petitioner(s)

Versus

UNION OF INDIA

...Respondent(s)

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE AMAN CHAUDHARY

Present : Mr. Mohan Sharma and Mr. Ashish Handa, Advocates
for the petitioner.

Mr. Amit Kumar Goyal, Advocate
for respondent-UOI.

AMAN CHAUDHARY. J.

The present petition has been filed under Section 439 Cr.P.C. for the grant of regular bail to the petitioner in respect of NCB Crime Number 67/2020 dated 09.12.2020, under Sections 8, 20, 29 and 60 of the NDPS Act registered vide NDPS/24/2021 dated 03.06.2021 before the Special Court Panchkula.

Learned counsel contends that the petitioner is in custody for the last 2 years and 2 months. He has been falsely implicated in the case. He was working as driver for last 3-4 years and was not the owner of the vehicle, from which the narcotics were allegedly recovered. He was merely delivering the goods to Chandigarh as entrusted to him by one Dalip. Charges were framed on 14.10.2022, however, none out of the total 25 witnesses has yet been examined. Co-accused Rohit Chawaria has been granted bail by this Court vide order dated 25.01.2023. Petitioner is not involved in any other case under the NDPS Act.

Learned counsel appearing for the NCB, Union of India has produced

the custody certificate, which is taken on record. He opposes the bail on the ground that the contraband in question was recovered from the petitioner which falls under the commercial quantity as per the Schedule of the NDPS Act. He is however unable to controvert the submissions made by learned counsel for the petitioner regarding the custody of the petitioner, not being involved in any other case, stage of trial and the co-accused having been granted regular bail by this Court.

Heard.

Hon'ble The Supreme Court of India in the case of **Dheeraj Kumar Shukla Vs. The State of Uttar Pradesh**, SLP (Criminal) No.6690/2022 decided on 25.01.2023 observed that in case of long custody period, involving quantity recovered to be of commercial nature, where the trial is yet to commence, though charges had been framed, the condition of Section 37 of NDPS Act can be dispensed with. Similarly, in the case of **Shariful Islam @ Sarif versus The State of West Bengal** SLP (Crl.) No.4173/2022, decided on 04.08.2022, Hon'ble The Supreme Court of India granted bail to the petitioner in a case of recovery of commercial quantity of contraband, considering incarceration for over 1 year and 6 months and there being no likelihood of completion of trial in the near future. In the case of **Bhupender Singh vs. Narcotic Control Bureau** (2022) 2 RCR (Crl.) 706, the Division Bench of this Court observed with regard to achieving balance between right to speedy trial guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India and rigors of Section 37 of NDPS Act. This Court in the case of **Balraj Singh vs. State of Punjab** CRM-M-57386-2022, decided on 14.12.2022 has followed the dictum laid down by Hon'ble The Supreme Court of India and granted the bail to the petitioner therein after he had undergone total custody of 1

year and 6 months. In the case of **Munasi Masih vs. State of Punjab**, CRM-M-31504-2022, decided on 06.2.2023, this Court granted bail to a first offender from whom commercial quantity of contraband had been recovered and only 2 out of 13 PWs have been examined, by observing that in view of delayed trial, the rigors of Section 37 of NDPS Act can be diluted to an extent and the petitioner can be granted bail, keeping in mind the right to a speedy trial as envisaged Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

In view of the afore-referred judgments, facts and circumstances of the case and, in particular that the petitioner is in custody for the last 02 years, 02 months and 12 days; not involved in any other case; co-accused has been granted bail by this Court; though charges were framed on 14.10.2022, however, none out of the total 25 witnesses has yet been examined; the trial is likely to take a considerable time, further incarceration of the petitioner would be violative of his right enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India and the rigors of Section 37 of the NDPS Act can be diluted bearing in mind the right to a speedy trial, thus the present petition for grant of regular bail deserves to be allowed.

As a result, the present petition is allowed. The petitioner is ordered to be released on regular bail, subject to his furnishing bail/surety bonds to the satisfaction of trial Court/Duty Magistrate concerned and subject to him not being required in any other case. The petitioner shall abide by the following conditions:-

1. The petitioner will not tamper with the evidence during the trial.
2. The petitioner will not pressurize/ intimidate the prosecution witnesses.
3. The petitioner will appear before the trial Court on each and every date fixed, unless is exempted by a specific order of Court.
4. The petitioner shall not commit an offence similar to the offence of which, he is an accused, or for commission of which he is suspected of.
5. The petitioner shall not directly or indirectly coerce, induce, threaten or promise to any person acquainted with the facts of the

case so as to dissuade him/ her from disclosing such facts to the Court or to any police officer or tamper with the evidence in any manner.

6. The petitioner shall not in any manner misuse his liberty.

7. The petitioner shall furnish his address and mobile number to the Trial Court forthwith and shall not change the same till the conclusion of the trial and in case for any reason, the petitioner seeks to change any of the aforesaid, the same shall be done only with prior intimation to the learned Trial Court, stating the reason for the same.

8. The petitioner shall deposit his passport, if any, with the Trial Court forthwith and in case, he does not have the passport, he shall furnish a specific affidavit in this regard.

It is made abundantly clear that in case there is any breach of the aforesaid conditions, the State shall be at liberty to seek cancellation of bail as granted to the petitioner by this order.

In view of the above, this Court makes it clarified that the observations made herein above are limited for the purpose of present proceedings and would not be construed as any opinion on the merits of the case and the trial would proceed independently of the aforesaid observations.

(AMAN CHAUDHARY)
JUDGE

February 24, 2023

S.Sharma(syr)

Whether speaking/reasoned	:	Yes/No
Whether reportable	:	Yes/No