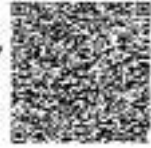


2024:PHHC:115707



203 (2nd case)

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

**CRM-M-10061-2023 (O&M)
Date of decision: 03.09.2024**

Amit Chauhan

...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE MAHABIR SINGH SINDHU

Present: Mr. A.P.S.Deol, Senior Advocate assisted by
Mr. Himmat Deol & Mr. Vishal R. Lamba, Advocates
for the petitioner.

Mr. Deepinder Singh Brar, Sr. D.A.G., Punjab
for the respondent.

MAHABIR SINGH SINDHU, J.

Present petition has been filed under Section 438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 for grant of pre-arrest bail to the petitioner in FIR No.07 dated 06.06.2022, under Sections 7, 7A, 13(1)(a) & (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 [as amended by Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018]; Section 120-B of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (*for short 'IPC'*) [Sections 409, 420, 465, 467, 468, 471 IPC added later on), registered at Police Station Vigilance Bureau, Flying Squad 1, Punjab at Mohali, District SAS Nagar.

(2) Above FIR was registered by complainant-Harvinder Pal Singh, DSP, Vigilance Bureau, Unit SAS Nagar with the allegations that petitioner

2024:PHHC:115707



while posting as District Forest Officer, Rupnagar got issued permit(s) for cutting of 1160 Khair trees at Badiali Kalan and took bribe @ ₹ 500/- per tree.

(3) Learned Counsel contends that petitioner was granted interim bail by the Coordinate Bench, vide order dated 15.05.2023 and in pursuance thereof, he has already joined the investigation; hence, custodial interrogation of the petitioner is not required.

(4) Learned State Counsel also, after obtaining instructions from Inspector Gagandeep Kaur, acknowledged the above factual position and submits that as on today, custodial interrogation of the petitioner is not required.

(5) Heard learned Counsel for the parties and perused the paper-book.

(6) It transpires that petitioner was granted interim bail by the Coordinate Bench, vide order dated 15.05.2023 and the order reads as under:-

“

<i>FIR No.</i>	<i>Dated</i>	<i>Police Station</i>	<i>Sections</i>
7	6.6.2022	Vigilance Bureau, Flying Squad 1, Punjab at Mohali, District SAS Nagar.	7, 7A, 13(1)(A)(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2018 and 120-B IPC and Sections 409, 420, 465, 467, 468, 471 IPC (added later on)

2024:PHHC:115707



1. *The petitioner apprehending arrest in the FIR captioned above, has come up before this Court under Section 438 CrPC seeking anticipatory bail.*

2. *In paragraph 12 of the bail petition, the accused declares that he has no criminal antecedents.*

3. *Petitioner's counsel prays for bail by imposing any stringent conditions. Petitioner's counsel argued that the custodial investigation would serve no purpose whatsoever, and the pre-trial incarceration would cause an irreversible injustice to the petitioner and family.*

4. *However, State strongly opposes the extension of interim order on the ground that the petitioner is not likely to join the investigation and most likely, he shall use his political power/influence to hamper the investigation.*

REASONING:

5. *The petitioner is a first offender, and one of the relevant factors would be to provide an opportunity to course-correct. Even a prima facie perusal of paragraph 2 of the bail petition needs consideration for bail.*

6. *The allegations against the petitioner are that while he was posted as District Forest Officer, Rupnagar, he issued permit for cutting of 1160 khair trees at Badiali Kalan and took bribe @ Rs.500/- per tree.*

7. *In Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v State of Punjab, 1980 (2) SCC 565, (Para 30), a Constitutional Bench of Supreme Court held that the bail decision must enter the cumulative effect of the variety of circumstances justifying the grant or refusal of bail. In Kalyan Chandra Sarkar v Rajesh Ranjan @ Pappu Yadav, 2005 (2) SCC 42, (Para 18) a three-member Bench of Supreme Court held that the persons accused of non-bailable offences are entitled to bail if the Court concerned concludes that the prosecution has failed to establish a prima facie case against him, or despite the existence of a prima facie case, the Court records reasons for its satisfaction for the need to release such*

2024:PHHC:115707



person on bail, in the given fact situations. The rejection of bail does not preclude filing a subsequent application. The courts can release on bail, provided the circumstances then prevailing requires, and a change in the fact situation. In State of Rajasthan v Balchand, AIR 1977 SC 2447, (Para 2 & 3), Supreme Court noticeably illustrated that the basic rule might perhaps be tersely put as bail, not jail, except where there are circumstances suggestive of fleeing from justice or thwarting the course of justice or creating other troubles in the shape of repeating offences or intimidating witnesses and the like by the petitioner who seeks enlargement on bail from the Court. It is true that the gravity of the offence involved is likely to induce the petitioner to avoid the course of justice and must weigh when considering the question of jail. So also, the heinousness of the crime. In Gudikanti Narasimhulu v Public Prosecutor, (1978) 1 SCC 240, (Para 16), Supreme Court held that the delicate light of the law favors release unless countered by the negative criteria necessitating that course. In Prahlad Singh Bhati v NCT, Delhi, (2001) 4 SCC 280, Supreme Court highlighted one of the factors for bail to be the public or the State's immense interest and similar other considerations. In Dataram Singh v State of Uttar Pradesh, (2018) 3 SCC 22, (Para 6), Supreme Court held that the grant or refusal of bail is entirely within the discretion of the judge hearing the matter and though that discretion is unfettered, it must be exercised judiciously, compassionately, and in a humane manner. Also, conditions for the grant of bail ought not to be so strict as to be incapable of compliance, thereby making the grant of bail illusory.

8. The possibility of the accused influencing the investigation, tampering with evidence, intimidating witnesses, and the likelihood of fleeing justice, can be taken care of by imposing elaborative and stringent conditions. In Sushila Aggarwal, (2020) 5 SCC 1, Para 92, the Constitutional Bench held that

2024:PHHC:115707



unusually, subject to the evidence produced, the Courts can impose restrictive conditions. In Sumit Mehta v. State of N.C.T. of Delhi, (2013)15 SCC 570, Para 11, Supreme Court holds that while exercising power Under Section 438 of the Code, the Court is duty-bound to strike a balance between the individual's right to personal freedom and the right of investigation of the police. While exercising utmost restraint, the Court can impose conditions countenancing its object as permissible under the law to ensure an uninterrupted and unhampered investigation.

9. Without commenting on the case's merits, in the facts and circumstances peculiar to this case, and for the reasons mentioned above, the petitioner makes a case for interim bail, till the next date, subject to the following terms and conditions, which shall be over and above and irrespective of the contents of the form of bail bonds in chapter XXXIII of CrPC, 1973.

10. This interim shall continue only till the disposal of the petition. However, if the petition is allowed, then it shall continue for the entire trial, subject to the terms and conditions mentioned in the order.

11. In Mahidul Sheikh v. State of Haryana, CRM-33030-2021 in CRA-S-363-2020, decided on 14-01-2022, Para 53, [Law Finder Doc Id # 1933969], this Court observed,

[53]. The pragmatic approach is that while granting bail with sureties, the “Court” and the “Arresting Officer” should give a choice to the accused to either furnish surety bonds or to handover a fixed deposit, or direct electronic money transfer where such facility is available, or creating a lien over his bank account. The accused should also have a further option to switch between the modes. The option lies with the accused to choose between the sureties and deposits and not with the Court or the arresting officer.

2024:PHHC:115707



12. Given above, provided the petitioner is not required in any other case, the petitioner shall be released on bail, till the next date, in the FIR captioned above, in the following terms:

(a). Petitioner to furnish personal bond of Rs. Ten thousand (INR 10,000/-); AND

(b) To give one surety of Rs. Twenty-five thousand (INR 25,000/-), to the satisfaction of the concerned investigator/SHO. Before accepting the surety, the concerned officer must satisfy that if the accused fail to appear in court, then such surety can produce such accused before the court.

OR

(b) Petitioner to hand over to the concerned investigator/SHO a fixed deposit for Rs. Ten Thousand only (INR 10,000/-), with the clause of automatic renewal of the principal and the interest reverting to the linked account, made in favour of the 'Chief Judicial Magistrate' of the concerned district. The fixed deposit may be made from any of the banks where the stake of the State is more than 50% or any of the well-established and stable private sector banks. The fixed deposit need not necessarily be made from the petitioner's account.

(c). In case of the launching of the prosecution, the said fixed deposit be forwarded to the concerned court along with the police report/challan under 173 CrPC.

(d). Such court shall have a lien over the deposit until the case's closure, or discharged by substitution, or up to the expiry of the period mentioned under S. 437-A CrPC, 1973, and at that stage, subject to the proceedings under S. 446 CrPC, the entire amount of fixed deposit, less taxes if any, shall be endorsed/returned to the depositor.

(e). It shall be the discretion of the petitioner to choose between surety bonds and fixed deposits. It shall also be open for the petitioner to apply to the Investigator or the concerned court to substitute the fixed deposit with surety bonds and vice-versa.

2024:PHHC:115707



(f). On the reverse page of personal bond, the petitioner shall mention her/his permanent address along with the phone number, preferably that numbers which is linked with the AADHAR, and e-mail (if any). In case of any change in the above particulars, the petitioner shall immediately and not later than 30 days from such modification intimate about the change to the concerned police station and the concerned court.

(g). The petitioner is to also execute a bond for attendance in the concerned court(s) as and when asked to do so. The presentation of the personal bond shall be deemed acceptance of the declarations made in the bail petition and all other stipulations, terms, and conditions of section 438(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and also of this bail order.

13. The petitioner shall be in deemed custody for Section 27 of the Indian Evidence Act. The petitioner shall join the investigation as and when called by the Investigating Officer or any Superior Officer; and shall cooperate with the investigation at all further stages as might be required. In the event of failure to do so, it will be open for the prosecution to seek cancellation of the bail. Whenever the investigation occurs within the police premises, the petitioner shall not be called before 8 AM and shall be let off before 6 PM, and shall not be subjected to third-degree, indecent language, inhuman treatment, etc.

14. The petitioner shall not influence, browbeat, pressurize, make any inducement, threat, or promise, directly or indirectly, to the witnesses, the Police officials, or any other person acquainted with the facts and the circumstances of the case, to dissuade them from disclosing such facts to the Police, or the Court, or to tamper with the evidence.

15. Given the nature of the allegations and the other circumstances peculiar to this case, the petitioner shall surrender all weapons, firearms, ammunition, if any, along with the arms license to the concerned authority within ten days from today and inform the Investigator about the compliance.

2024:PHHC:115707



However, subject to the Indian Arms Act, 1959, the petitioner shall be entitled to renew and take it back in case of acquittal in this case, provided otherwise permissible in the concerned rules.

16. Within ten days from today, the petitioners shall forward to the Investigator/SHO and the complainant/victim(s) the complete details of bank account numbers with addresses, fixed deposits, DEMAT account numbers, the current market value of jewelry, sovereign metals, all precious articles, held either individually or jointly, and cash-in-hand. If the petitioner fails to comply with this condition, then on this ground alone. In that case, the bail might be canceled, and the complainant may file any such application for the cancellation of bail, and State shall file the said application.

17. During the trial's pendency, if the petitioner repeats or commits any offence where the sentence prescribed is more than seven years or violates any condition as stipulated in this order, it shall always be permissible to the respondent to apply for cancellation of this bail. It shall further be open for any investigating agency to bring it to the notice of the Court seized of the subsequent application that the accused was earlier cautioned not to indulge in criminal activities. Otherwise, the bail bonds shall continue to remain in force throughout the trial and after that in terms of Section 437-A of the Cr.P.C.

18. Any Advocate for the petitioner and the Officer in whose presence the petitioner puts signatures on personal bonds shall explain all conditions of this bail order in any language that the petitioner understands.

19. If the petitioner finds bond amount beyond social and financial reach, it may be brought to the notice of this Court for appropriate reduction. Further, if the petitioner finds bail condition(s) as violating fundamental, human, or other rights, or causing difficulty due to any situation, then for modification of such term(s), the petitioner may file a reasoned application before this Court, and after taking cognizance, even to the Court

2024:PHHC:115707



taking cognizance or the trial Court, as the case may be, and such Court shall also be competent to modify or delete any condition.

20. This order does not, in any manner, limit or restrict the rights of the Police or the investigating agency from further investigation as per law.

21. In case the Investigator/Officer-In-Charge of the concerned Police Station arraigns another section of any penal offence in this FIR, and if the new section prescribes maximum sentence which is not greater than the sections mentioned above, then this bail order shall be deemed to have also been passed for the newly added section(s). However, suppose the newly inserted sections prescribe a sentence exceeding the maximum sentence prescribed in the sections mentioned above, then, in that case, the Investigator/Officer-In-Charge shall give the petitioner notice of a minimum of seven days providing an opportunity to avail the remedies available in law.

22. The petitioner is directed to join investigation. Since the State is opposing the bail, the petitioner shall join investigation as and when called upon to do so and shall also remain present in the concerned police station at 9 AM, one day prior to the next date of hearing. Failure to appear and not cooperating with the Investigating Officer ipso facto shall result in vacation of interim protection and dismissal of this petition.

23. Any observation made hereinabove is neither an expression of opinion on the merits of the case nor shall the trial Court advert to these comments.

24. In return for the protection from incarceration, the Court believes that the accused shall also reciprocate through desirable behavior.

25. The SHO of the concerned police station or the investigating officer shall arrange to send a copy of this order, preferably a soft copy, to the complainant and the victim, without any delay. If the victim(s) notice any violation of this order, they may

2024:PHHC:115707



inform the SHO of the concerned police station, the trial court, or even this court.

26. There would be no need for a certified copy of this order for furnishing bonds, and any Advocate for the Petitioner can download this order along with case status from the official web page of this Court and attest it to be a true copy. In case the attesting officer wants to verify the authenticity, such an officer can also verify its authenticity and may download and use the downloaded copy for attesting bonds.

List on 11.7.2023. Status report/response/instructions be filed in the meantime.”

(7) On previous date of hearing i.e. 27.08.2024, this Court passed the following order:-

“Learned State counsel, on instructions, acknowledged that although, all 05 petitioners have joined investigation in pursuance of the interim orders passed on respective dates, but he seeks time to have instructions as to whether custodial interrogation of any petitioner is required and if so, reasons for the same.

Posted for 03.09.2024.

Till the next date of hearing, interim order(s) in respective case(s) to continue.

Photocopy of this order be placed on the file(s) of the connected case(s).”

(8) As already noticed, it is acknowledged by learned State Counsel on instructions that in pursuance of the order dated 15.05.2023, petitioner has joined investigation and his custodial interrogation is not required.

2024:PHHC:115707



(9) In view of the above, present petition is allowed; interim order dated 15.05.2023 is made absolute subject to the conditions as envisaged under Section 438(2) Cr.P.C.

(10) It is also made clear that petitioner shall fully co-operate with the Investigating Officer as and when called for further investigation.

(11) The above observations may not be construed as an expression of opinion on merits of the case; rather confined only to decide the present bail matter.

(12) It is clarified that in case there is recurrence on the part of the petitioner, State would be at liberty to move an appropriate application for recalling of this order.

Pending application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed off.

3rd September, 2024
Gagan

(MAHABIR SINGH SINDHU)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned	Yes/No
Whether Reportable	Yes/No