

CRM-M-21648-2024

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-21648-2024
Reserved on: 14.05.2024
Pronounced on: 28.05.2024

Karamjit Singh @ Karmu ...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab ...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ANOOP CHITKARA

Present: Mr. S.P.S. Khaira, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr. Sukhdev Singh, AAG, Punjab.

ANOOP CHITKARA, J.

FIR No.	Dated	Police Station	Sections
49	17.01.2024	Division No.7, Ludhiana, Punjab	52-A(1) Prison Act, Sections 21/29/61/85 of NDPS Act, Section 120B, 34 IPC and 7 & 13 of PC (Amendment) Act 2018

1. The petitioner, incarcerated upon his arrest in the FIR captioned above, has come up before this Court under Section 439 of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC) seeking bail.

2. In paragraph 13 of the bail petition, the accused declares the following criminal antecedents:

Sr. No.	FIR No.	Date	Offences	Police Station
1	304	2018	22 of NDPS Act	Sadar Jagraon
2	48	2020	61/1/14 of Excise (Malt Liquors) Act	Sidhwan Bet
3	43	2018	21, 25, 61 & 85 of NDPS Act	Hathur
4	129	2018	457, 380, 34 IPC	Sadar Jagraon
5	222	2018	22 of NDPS Act	Sadar Jagraon
6	171	2019	363, 366 IPC	City Jagraon
7	11	2019	22 of NDPS Act	Sadar Jagraon
8	5	2019	21 of NDPS Act	Sadar Jagraon
9	14	2019	22 of NDPS Act	Sadar Jagraon

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3. Petitioner's counsel submits that the petitioner was lodged in central Jail, Ludhiana for an offence under NDPS Act during the period to which the alleged offences are related to the petitioner and the petitioner is not linked to any of the offence as alleged in the FIR. There is no evidence on record even after the completion of investigation in the present case against the petitioner except the disclosure statement. It is also submitted that no recovery whatsoever has been effected consequent upon the disclosure statement of the petitioner or of the co-accused and no contraband has been recovered in the present case which would attract the offence under NDPS Act. The present petitioner is not a government servant and as such the provisions of P.C. Act are not applicable to the petitioner. Counsel further prays for bail by imposing any stringent conditions and is also voluntarily agreeable to the condition that till the conclusion of the trial, the petitioner shall keep only one mobile number, which is mentioned in AADHAR card, if any, and within fifteen days undertakes to disconnect all other mobile numbers. The petitioner contends that the further pre-trial incarceration would cause an irreversible injustice to the petitioner and family.

4. The state's counsel opposes the bail and states that considering the allegations, the petitioner's custodial interrogation is necessary. The State's counsel further contends that given the criminal past, the accused is not entitled to any bail.

5. In *Maulana Mohd Amir Rashadi v. State of U.P.*, (2012) 3 SCC 382, Hon'ble Supreme Court holds,

[10] It is not in dispute and highlighted that the second respondent is a sitting Member of Parliament facing several criminal cases. It is also not in dispute that most of the cases ended in acquittal for want of proper witnesses or pending trial. As observed by the High Court, merely on the basis of criminal antecedents, the claim of the second respondent cannot be rejected. In other words, it is the duty of the Court to find out the role of the accused in the case in which he has been charged and other circumstances such as possibility of fleeing away from the jurisdiction of the Court etc.

6. While considering each bail petition of the accused with a criminal history, it throws an onerous responsibility upon the Courts to act judiciously with reasonableness because arbitrariness is the antithesis of law. The criminal history must be of cases where the accused was convicted, including the suspended sentences and all pending First Information Reports, wherein the bail petitioner stands arraigned as an accused. In reckoning the number of cases as criminal history, the prosecutions resulting in acquittal or discharge, or when Courts quashed the FIR; the prosecution stands withdrawn, or prosecution filed a closure report; cannot be included. Although crime is to be despised

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and not the criminal, yet for a recidivist, the contours of a playing field are marshy, and graver the criminal history, slushier the puddles.

7. Prosecution's case is being taken from reply dated 13.05.2024, which reads as under:-

"That on 17.01.2024 SI Janak Raj along with other police officials were present at Tajpur Road in connection with patrolling duty, then the said SI received a secret information that since last sometime, illegal activities are being carried in Central Jail-Ludhiana in which some jail inmates in connivance with their outside accomplices and also in connivance with jail staff, are carrying illegal activities in jail. The jail inmates through their outside accomplices, get supplied mobile phones and Heroin in the jail. Some of those inmates are Ashu Arora, Sahil Jindal, Ram Rattan and Mukhtiar Singh. These inmates through their outside accomplices Dilpreet Singh, Mandeep Kaur and other unknown persons get supplied intoxicant substance and mobile phones inside the jail premises by making online payment through PayTM and Googlepay. Accordingly FIR No. 49 dated 17.01.2024, u / s 52- A(1) of Prisons Act, 21 of NDPS Act and 120 - B 34 IPC, P.S. Division No.7, Ludhiana was registered against the said Ashu Arora, Sahil Jindal, Ram Rattan, Mukhtiar Singh, Dilpreet Singh and Manpreet Kaur.

2. Jindal, That on 18.01.2024 accused Ashu Arora, Sahil Mukhtiar Singh and Ram Rattan were formally arrested in the present case thoroughly examined during which it and were was revealed that the above said accused in connivance with the present petitioner (inmate), Vijay Kumar, Mohamad Sehzad and Sarwan Singh (all inmates) used to supply intoxicant substance in the jail premises. Accordingly the petitioner and said Vijay Kumar, Mohamad Sehzad and Sarwan Singh were nominated as accused on 18.01.2024 and were formally arrested in this case on 20.01.2024.

During his examination, the petitioner made a Confessional Statement u/s 27 of the Evidence Act on 21.01.2024 that he was confined in Central Jail, Ludhiana in case FIR No.171/2021, u/s 21 of NDPS Act, P.S. Sadar, Jagraon where the petitioner in connivance with other inmates and also in connivance with Assistant Superintendents Gagan Sharma and Satnam Singh started selling mobile phones inside the jail to other inmates. In this way the petitioner had sold 50 mobile phones and thereafter again sold 15 mobile phones. Payments of those sold mobile phones was got deposited by the petitioner through Googlepay on the mobile phone of his friend Raju who was also nominated as accused. The petitioner further stated in his said statement that thereafter he had been purchasing mobile phones from the above said Assistant Superintendents Gagan Sharma and Satnam Singh through their confidential person Rajesh inmate. Similar statements were made by co-accused. Accordingly the said Assistant Superintendents Gagan Sharma and Satnam Singh were nominated as accused and offences u/s 7, 13 of Prevention of Corruption Act were added and they were arrested on 22.01.2024 and were identified by one Jagandeep Singh to have obtained money from him many times by the said officials near Parkash Dhaba, totalling Rs.6.00 Lac. Offence u/s 21 of NDPS Act was removed and 29 of NDPS Act was added. During the investigation, three mobile phones were recovered from the Quarter/Room No.55 of said Gagandeep Sharma-Assistant Superintendent. Involvement of inmates Gurvinder Singh and Manvir

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Singh was also found in the crime and they were nominated as accused on 26.03.2024 and 27.03.2024 respectively. Bank statements of accused Gurjinder Singh @ Vicky Jatt were gathered in which money was being deposited.

3. That after completion of the investigation, Challan/Final Report u/s 173 Cr.P.C. has been submitted against the petitioner and his co-accused before the Ld. Trial Court on 16.03.2024 but Charges have not been framed as yet and now the trial is pending in the court of Sh. Amrinder Singh Shergill, Ld. Addl. Sessions Judge, Ludhiana and is fixed for 14.05.2024 for procuring presence of the accused."

8. As per paragraph 6 of the bail petition, the petitioner is in custody since 20.01.2024. Given the penal provisions invoked viz-a-viz pre-trial custody, coupled with the prima facie analysis of the nature of allegations, and the other factors peculiar to this case, there would be no justifiability for further pre-trial incarceration at this stage, subject to the compliance of terms and conditions mentioned in this order. Thus, the previous criminal history of the petitioner is not being considered strictly at this stage as a factor for denying bail.

9. In Sanjay Chandra v. Central Bureau of Investigation, (2012) 1 SCC 40, Supreme Court holds,

[28] We are conscious of the fact that the accused are charged with economic offences of huge magnitude. We are also conscious of the fact that the offences alleged, if proved, may jeopardize the economy of the country. At the same time, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the investigating agency has already completed investigation and the charge sheet is already filed before the Special Judge, CBI, New Delhi. Therefore, their presence in the custody may not be necessary for further investigation. We are of the view that the appellants are entitled to the grant of bail pending trial on stringent conditions in order to allay the apprehension expressed by CBI.

10. 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 elaborate and stringent conditions. In *Sushila Aggarwal v. State (NCT of Delhi)*, **2020:INSC:106 [Para 92]**, (2020) 5 SCC 1, Para 92, the Constitutional Bench held that unusually, subject to the evidence produced, the Courts can impose restrictive conditions.

11. 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 bail, 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,

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1973. This order shall come into force from the time it is uploaded on the official webpage of this Court.

12. In Madhu Tanwar. v. State of Punjab, **2023:PHHC:077618 [Para 10, 21]**, CRM-M-27097-2023, decided on 29-05-2023, this court observed,

[10] The exponential growth in technology and artificial intelligence has transformed identification techniques remarkably. Voice, gait, and facial recognition are incredibly sophisticated and pervasive. Impersonation, as we know it traditionally, has virtually become impossible. Thus, the remedy lies that whenever a judge or an officer believes that the accused might be a flight risk or has a history of fleeing from justice, then in such cases, appropriate conditions can be inserted that all the expenditure that shall be incurred to trace them, shall be recovered from such person, and the State shall have a lien over their assets to make good the loss.

[21] In this era when the knowledge revolution has just begun, to keep pace with exponential and unimaginable changes the technology has brought to human lives, it is only fitting that the dependence of the accused on surety is minimized by giving alternative options. Furthermore, there should be no insistence to provide permanent addresses when people either do not have permanent abodes or intend to re-locate.

13. Given above, provided the petitioner is not required in any other case, the petitioner shall be released on bail 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 court, and in case of non-availability, to any nearest Ilaqa Magistrate/duty Magistrate. Before accepting the surety, the concerned officer/court must satisfy that if the accused fails to appear in court, then such surety can produce the accused before the court.

OR

(b). Petitioner to hand over to the concerned court 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 favor of the 'Chief Judicial Magistrate' of the concerned district, or blocking the aforesaid amount in favour of the concerned 'Chief Judicial Magistrate'. Said fixed deposit or blocking funds can be from any of the banks where the stake of the State is more than 50% or from any of the well-established and stable private sector banks. In case the bankers are

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not willing to make a Fixed Deposit in such eventuality it shall be permissible for the petitioner to prepare an account payee demand draft favouring concerned Chief Judicial Magistrate for a similar amount.

(c). Such court shall have a lien over the funds 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.

(d). 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 of this bail order.

(e). While furnishing personal bond, the petitioner shall mention the following personal identification details:

1.	AADHAR number	
2.	Passport number, (If available), when the court attesting the bonds thinks appropriate or considers the accused as a flight risk.	
3.	Mobile number (If available)	
4.	E-Mail id (If available)	

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. Petitioner to comply with their undertaking made in the bail petition, made before this court through counsel as reflected at the beginning of this order. If the petitioner fails to comply with any of such undertakings, then on this ground alone, the bail might be canceled, and the victim/complainant may file any such application for the cancellation of bail, and the State shall file the said application.

16. The petitioner is directed not to keep more than one prepaid SIM, i.e., one pre-paid mobile phone number, till the conclusion of the trial; however, this restriction is

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only on prepaid SIMs [mobile numbers] and not on post-paid connections or landline numbers. The petitioner must comply with this condition within fifteen days of release from prison. The concerned DySP shall also direct all the telecom service providers to deactivate all prepaid SIM cards and prepaid mobile numbers issued to the petitioner, except the one that is mentioned as the primary number/ default number linked with the AADHAAR card and further that till the no objection from the concerned SHO, the mobile service providers shall not issue second pre-paid SIM/ mobile number in the petitioner's name. Since, as on date, in India, there are only four prominent mobile service providers, namely BSNL, Airtel, Vodafone-Idea, and Reliance Jio, any other telecom service provider are directed to comply with the directions of the concerned Superintendent of Police/Commissioner of Police, issued in this regard and disable all prepaid mobile phone numbers issued in the name of the petitioner, except the main number/default number linked with AADHAR, by taking such information from the petitioner's AADHAR details or any other source, for which they shall be legally entitled by this order. This condition shall continue till the completion of the trial or closure of the case, whichever is earlier. In Vernon v. The State of Maharashtra, **2023 INSC 655**, [para 45], while granting bail under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2002, Supreme Court had directed imposition of the similar condition, which reads as follows, "(d) Both the appellants shall use only one Mobile Phone each, during the time they remain on bail and shall inform the Investigating Officer of the NIA, their respective mobile numbers."

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 remain in force throughout the trial and after that in Section 437-A of the Cr.P.C., if not canceled due to non-appearance or breach of conditions.

18. The conditions mentioned above imposed by this Court are to endeavour that the accused tries to reform, does not repeat the offence and to provide an opportunity to the victim to consider legal remedies for recovery of the amount. In Mohammed Zubair v. State of NCT of Delhi, **2022:INSC:735 [Para 28]**, Writ Petition (Criminal) No 279 of 2022, Para 29, decided on July 20, 2022, A Three-Judge bench of Hon'ble Supreme Court holds that "The bail conditions imposed by the Court must not only have a nexus to the purpose that they seek to serve but must also be proportional to the purpose of

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imposing them. The courts, while imposing bail conditions, must balance the liberty of the accused and the necessity of a fair trial. While doing so, conditions that would result in the deprivation of rights and liberties must be eschewed.”

19. 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.

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

21. 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.

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

23. *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.*

Petition allowed in aforesaid terms. All pending applications, if any, stand disposed.

(ANOOP CHITKARA)
JUDGE

28.05.2024
anju rani

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