



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

**CRM-M-31382-2024
DECIDED ON: 10.07.2024**

AVTAR SINGH @ TARI

.....PETITIONER

VERSUS

STATE OF PUNJAB

.....RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL

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

Mr. Jasjit Singh Rattu, DAG, Punjab.

SANDEEP MOUDGIL, J (ORAL)

1. The jurisdiction of this Court has been invoked for the third time under Section 439 Cr.P.C. for grant of regular bail to the petitioner in FIR No.197, dated 16.11.2021, under Sections 15, 29 of the NDPS Act, 1985 and Section 192, 207 of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, registered at Police Station Special Task Force, Phase IV, District SAS Nagar (Mohali).

2. Learned counsel for the petitioner contends that the present petitioner was merely deputed as a driver by co-accused Beant Singh, who is the owner of the alleged vehicle, in which the alleged contraband to the tune of 1600 kgs of poppy pods were recovered, has been granted the concession of regular bail by this Court vide order dated 25.04.2024 passed in CRM-M-18845-2024. He further contends that the petitioner was not aware of the material being transported at the alleged truck being merely as a truck driver on petty wages.

3. On the other hand, learned State counsel has produced the custody certificate of the petitioner today in Court, which is taken on record. He seeks dismissal of the instant petition on the ground that the petitioner was driving the offending vehicle carrying huge quantity of contraband i.e. 1600 kgs of poppy pods which cannot be termed by any stretch of imagination to be a case of false implication and planted recovery on the present petitioner.

4. Be that as it may, with regard to the fact that main accused Beant Singh, who is the owner of the alleged vehicle, has been granted the concession of regular bail by this Court vide order dated 25.04.2024 (Annexure P-3) passed in CRM-M-18845-2024 as has been referred hereinabove apart from that another co-accused Manpreet Singh has also been granted the concession of regular bail vide order dated 30.05.2024 (Annexure P-4) passed in CRM-M-26712-2024; the petitioner is not involved in any other case, meaning thereby, he is not a habitual offender added with fact that the conclusion of the trial will take a long time, for which the petitioner cannot be detained behind the bars for an indefinite period.

5. Even further, right to speedy trial is a part of reasonable, fair and just procedure guaranteed under Article 21. This constitutional right cannot be denied to the accused as is the mandate of the Apex court in **“Hussainara Khatoon and ors (IV) v. Home Secretary, State of Bihar, Patna”, (1980) 1 SCC 98;** wherein it was held as under:

*“10. Directions given by this Court in Hussainara Khatoon (supra) to this effect were left to be implemented by the High Courts **Hussainara Khatoon and ors. (VII) etc. v. Home Secretary, Bihar and ors. etc. -(1995) 5 SCC 326 - para 2** are as follows :*

*"2. Since this Court has already laid down the guidelines by orders passed from time to time in this writ petition and in subsequent orders passed in different cases since then, we do not consider it necessary to restate the guidelines periodically because the enforcement of the guidelines by the subordinate courts functioning in different States should now be the responsibility of the different High Courts to which they are subordinate. General orders for release of undertrials without reference to specific fact-situations in different cases may prove to be hazardous. While there can be no doubt that undertrial prisoners should not languish in jails on account of refusal to enlarge them on bail for want of their capacity to furnish bail with monetary obligations, these are matters which have to be dealt with on case-to-case basis keeping in mind the guidelines laid down by this Court in the orders passed in this writ petition and in subsequent cases from time to time. Sympathy for the undertrials who are in jail for long terms on account of the pendency of cases has to be balanced having regard to the impact of crime, more particularly, serious crime, on society and these considerations have to be weighed having regard to the fact-situations in pending cases. While there can be no doubt that trials of those accused of crimes should be disposed of as early as possible, general orders in regard to judge strength of subordinate judiciary in each State must be attended to, and its functioning overseen, by the High Court of the State concerned. We share the sympathetic concern of the learned counsel for the petitioners that undertrials should not languish in jails for long spells merely on account of their inability to meet monetary obligations. **We are, however, of the view** that such monitoring can be done more effectively by the High Courts since it would be easy for that Court to collect and collate the statistical information in that behalf, apply the broad guidelines already issued and deal with the situation as it emerges from the status reports presented to it. The role of the High Court is to ensure that the guidelines issued by this Court are implemented in letter and spirit. We think it would suffice if we request the Chief Justices of the High Courts to undertake a review of such cases in their States and give appropriate directions where needed to ensure proper and effective implementation of the guidelines. Instead of repeating the general directions already*

issued, it would be sufficient to remind the High Courts to ensure expeditious disposal of cases...."

(emphasis added)

6. Moreover Deprivation of personal liberty without ensuring speedy trial is not consistent with Article 21. While deprivation of personal liberty for some period may not be avoidable, period of deprivation pending trial/appeal cannot be unduly long. The Apex Court in “***Abdul Rehman Antulay and others v. R.S. Nayak and another***”, 1992(2) RCR (Criminal) 634 observed that Right to Speedy Trial flowing from Article 21 encompasses all the stages, namely the stage of investigation, inquiry, trial, appeal, revision and retrial. And court also observed that the Right to Speedy Trial from the point of view of the accused are:

I. The period of remand and pre-conviction detention should be as short as possible. In other words, the accused should not be subjected to unnecessary or unduly long incarceration prior to his conviction;

II. The worry, anxiety, expense and disturbance to his vocation and peace, resulting from an unduly prolonged investigation, inquiry or trial should be minimal; and

III. Undue delay may well result in impairment of the ability of the accused to defend himself, whether on account of death, disappearance or non-availability of witnesses or otherwise.

7. Looking into the totality of facts and circumstances, the petitioner deserves the concession of regular bail.

8. Hence, the petitioner is directed to be released on regular bail on his furnishing bail and surety bonds to the satisfaction of the trial Court/Duty Magistrate, concerned.

9. In the afore-said terms, the present petition is hereby allowed.
10. However, it is made clear that anything stated hereinabove shall not be construed as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case.

10.07.2024
Poonam Negi

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)
JUDGE

<i>Whether speaking/reasoned</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>Whether reportable</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>