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Crl.R.C.No.1676 of 2024

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

Reserved On	23.10.2024
Pronounced On	31.01.2025

CORAM

THE HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE M.NIRMAL KUMAR

Crl.R.C.No.1676 of 2024

Dinesh

... Petitioner

Vs.

State, Rep. by,
The Inspector of Police,
T-7, Tank Factory Police Station,
Chennai.

... Respondent

Prayer:- Criminal Revision filed under Section 438 read with Section 442 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, to set aside the order dated 21.09.2024, passed in Crl.M.P.No.9898 of 2024 in Crime No.177 of 2023, on the file of the Principal Special Judge under EC and NDPS Act, Chennai.

For Petitioner : Mr.S.Senthilvel
For Respondent : Mr.Hasan Mohammed Jinnah,
State Public Prosecutor assisted by
Mr.A.Damodaran
Addl.Public Prosecutor

ORDER

This Criminal Revision Case has been filed by the petitioner (A1) in Crime No.177 of 2024, seeking to set aside the order dated 21.09.2024



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in Crl.M.P.No.9898 of 2024, wherein the learned Principal Special Judge under the EC and NDPS Act, Chennai, allowed the prosecution's petition filed on 05.09.2024, seeking an extension period to complete investigation under Section 36-A(4) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter referred to as 'the NDPS Act').

2. Since the issue under consideration pertains to the grant of relief under statutory bail, the relevant facts of the case alone discussed for consideration of the above prayer.

3. The learned counsel for the petitioner contended that the petitioner was arrested on 17.03.2024. Based on the petitioner's confession, psychotropic substance tablets, which are of commercial quantity, were seized. Subsequently, the petitioner filed a bail petition in Crl.M.P.No.10286 of 2024 seeking mandatory bail on 13.09.2024, i.e., on the 181st day. However, the petition was dismissed on 21.09.2024. It was only at that time that the petitioner learned that the respondent had filed a petition under Section 36-A(4) of the NDPS Act on 05.09.2024, i.e., on



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the 173rd day, in Crl.M.P.No.9898 of 2024, seeking an extension of the statutory period of investigation for a further 180 days. The said petition was allowed on 21.09.2024.

4. The learned counsel for the petitioner contended that the petitioner was served with the notice for extension only two days before the statutory period expired, which is improper. It is noted that the Lab Report has yet to be received. Further, the main supplier of the contraband has not been apprehended, money transaction of the accused persons yet to be collected and crucial documents remain to be collected. However, no specific details have been provided regarding the supplier or the documents. The learned counsel submitted that this petition has been filed solely to deny the petitioner's accrued right to statutory bail. Such practices have been deprecated by the Hon'ble Apex Court in several cases.

5. The learned counsel for the petitioner relied on the principles established in the case of **Judgebir Singh @ Jasbir Singh Samra @ Jasbir and others vs. National Investigation Agency** reported in **2023**



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SCC OnLine SC 543. In this case, the Hon'ble Apex Court, referring the judgments of the Constitution Bench in **Sanjay Dutt vs. State** reported in (1994) 5 SCC 410, as well as the judgments in **Uday Mohanlal Acharya vs. State of Maharashtra** reported in (2001) 5 SCC 453; **Suresh Kumar Bhikamchand Jain vs. State of Maharashtra** reported in (2013) 3 SCC 77; and **M.Ravindran vs. Intelligence Officer, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence** reported in (2021) 2 SCC 485, held that filing of a charge sheet is sufficient compliance with the provisions of Section 167 of the Cr.P.C. Further, the Hon'ble Apex Court held that an accused does not have an indefeasible right to be released on statutory/default bail under Section 167(2) of the Cr.P.C., simply because cognizance has not been taken before the expiry of the statutory time period after filing the charge sheet.

6. Further, the learned counsel for the petitioner, referring to Paragraph 76 of the **Judgebir Singh's case** [cited supra], submitted that an important principle has been highlighted, affirming that the law is now well settled the accused must be given an opportunity of hearing before the time for investigation is extended. It also held that the Courts could



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not have ruled that the extension period petition should be considered only after the statutory bail petition was decided, as this approach contradicts the well-established position of law. Further, it was emphasized that if the Investigating Agency seeks an extension, they must ensure that such a request is not made at the last moment.

7. The learned counsel for the petitioner further relied on the orders passed by this Court in **Crl.R.C.No.924 of 2023**, dated **22.06.2023** [**Ajith vs. State**] and **Crl.R.C.No.2122 of 2023**, dated **08.02.2024** [**Grant Victor Ikenna vs. State**]. In these cases, this Court referred to the guidelines and set aside the dismissal of statutory bail petition where the trial Court had delayed consideration of the bail petition and then dismissed the statutory bail petition, citing extension period to complete investigation under Section 36-A(4) of the NDPS Act had been granted, but at a later point of time.

8. The learned counsel for the petitioner further submitted that the Hon'ble Apex Court, in the case of **Jigar @ Jimmy Pravinchandra**



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Adatiya vs State of Gujarat reported in **CDJ 2022 SC 1043 : 2022**

SCC OnLine SC 1290, extensively considered its previous judgments and the provisions of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 (TADA Act), the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 (POTA Act), and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA Act), which are similar to Section 36-A(4) of the NDPS Act. The Hon'ble Apex Court held that it is mandatory to produce the accused and inform about petition seeking extension period to complete investigation. Further, the investigation report must meet the twin requirements for extension, and unless these requirements are fully satisfied, the extension cannot be granted as a matter of routine. The Hon'ble Apex Court also emphasized that granting extension period results in the deprivation of the accused's infeasible right to claim default bail which is a constitutional guarantee.

9. Further, the learned counsel relied on the decision of the Full Bench of the Calcutta High Court in **Subhas Yadav vs. The State of West Bengal** reported in **2023 SCC OnLine Cal 313** and submitted that the Full Bench of the Calcutta High Court had provided eight guidelines on how petitions arising under Section 36-A(4) of the NDPS Act and



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Section 167(2) of the Cr.P.C. should be considered, and issued directions accordingly.

10. The learned counsel for the petitioner submitted that any petition under Section 36-A(4) of the NDPS Act should be decided without undue delay, preferably within seven days from the filing of the petition. The Special Public Prosecutor's report seeking an extension must be served upon the accused or their counsel, and the accused should be present, either personally or through video link, at the time of Court's consideration of the petition.

11. The learned counsel for the petitioner further submitted that this Court, in the case of **Varun and others vs. State** reported in **2024 SCC OnLine Mad 162**, issued directions to the Special Court under the NDPS Act to adhere to these guidelines and circulated the order to all Principal District Judges across Tamil Nadu. Following the decision in **Varun's case** [cited supra], in a batch of cases in **Crl.R.C.Nos.1847, 1885, 1849 and 2002 of 2024** [**Mohamed Asaruthin vs. The State**], this Court, by order dated **27.11.2024**, held that if an extension period petition is filed



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and is pending when the statutory period for filing the final report expires, the trial Court must follow the directions issued by the Hon'ble Apex Court and consider the extension period petition and the bail petition together. The trial Court must consider the extension period petition as expeditiously as possible, and in any case, within seven days of receiving the petition. Furthermore, the investigating agency is required to file the extension period petition well in advance, at least 14 days before the expiry of the statutory period, so that, the trial Court can consider it before the statutory period ends. This would also allow the accused the opportunity to challenge the order if they feel aggrieved. There would thus be no need to consider the extension period petition together with statutory the bail petition. However, in extraordinary circumstances, the extension period petition may be filed within the last 14 days before the statutory period expires.

12. The learned counsel for the petitioner submitted that the indefeasible right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India cannot be infringed by filing an extension period petition at the last minute. Delays in serving the notice would unfairly infringe the statutory



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right and deny the indefeasible right that accrues to the petitioner.

Furthermore, in this case, the extension period petition was filed on 05.09.2024 i.e., on the 173rd day and notice was served on 10.09.2024 i.e., on the 178th day, depriving the petitioner of his mandatory right to be present, informed, and heard.

13. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor filed a counter affidavit detailing the registration of the case, the arrest of the accused, the seizure of contraband, which is of commercial quantity, the arrest of co-accused, and other aspects of the investigation.

14. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor submitted that the petitioner, along with others has been involved in the trafficking and distribution of psychotropic tablets. The petitioner was apprehended and, during interrogation, admitted to the offence. Based on his confession, the contraband was seized and sent to the laboratory for chemical analysis. During the investigation, the petitioner's associates were also arrested.

15. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor further submitted that



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once the extension period petition has been filed, the petitioner cannot seek or avail the statutory bail under Section 167(2) of the Cr.P.C. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor further submitted that the accused was arrested on 17.03.2024 and the 180th day fell on 12.09.2024. On 05.09.2024, the extension period petition was filed on the 173rd day, and notice was served on 10.09.2024 on 178th day. Both the statutory bail petition filed by the petitioner on 13.09.2024 and the extension period petition were considered and decided on the same day, 21.09.2024. The trial Court allowed the extension period petition and rightly dismissed the statutory bail petition, hence, the learned Additional Public Prosecutor sought for dismissal of the Criminal Revision Case.

16. Considering the above submissions and on perusal of the materials, it is evident that the Hon'ble Apex Court, in the case of **Judgebir Singh** [cited supra], following the decision in **Jigar @ Jimmy** [cited supra], held that the accused must be given an opportunity to be heard before granting extension period to complete investigation. The Hon'ble Apex Court further held, it is incorrect for Courts to withhold consideration of statutory bail petition merely because the petition for



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extension period to complete investigation is pending. Such a delay is contrary to the well-established position of law. The investigating agency, when seeking an extension, must ensure that such requests are not made at the last moment.

17. In Jigar @ Jimmy's case [cited supra], the Hon'ble Apex Court referred to its previous rulings, including that of Constitution Bench, examined the relevant provisions of the TADA, POTA and UAPA Acts, which are analogous to Section 36-A(4) of the NDPS Act. These provisions impose specific restrictions and confer certain rights to the investigating agency. After detailed consideration, the Hon'ble Apex Court concluded that Section 167(2) of the Cr.P.C. sets an outer time limit for remanding an accused, proportionate to the seriousness of the alleged offence. If the investigation is not completed within prescribed time, the accused is entitled to default bail as a matter of right, which is a constitutional right.

18. The timeline set under sub-section (2) of Section 167 of the Cr.P.C. ensures that investigating officers are compelled to act promptly



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and efficiently, preventing misuse of further remand periods. The Hon'ble Apex Court further held that sub-section (2) of Section 167 of Cr.P.C. is intrinsically linked to the constitutional guarantee under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which safeguards personal liberty against unlawful and arbitrary detention.

19. Furthermore, it emphasized that the report of the Special Public Prosecutor seeking extension period to complete investigation under Section 36-A(4) of the NDPS Act is not a mere formality but a crucial document, as its acceptance directly affects the liberty of the accused. The report must therefore strictly adhere to the legal requirements. Specifically, it must include:

- (a) A detailed account of the progress of the investigation, and
- (b) Specific reasons justifying the need for continuing the detention of the accused beyond the 180-day period.

Thus, the request for granting extension period to complete investigation is not a mere procedural formality.

20. As far as the service of notice regarding the petition for extension period to complete investigation is concerned, it is not



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necessary for the accused to receive a written notice with the reasons stated, suffice for the Court to inform the accused that the extension of the investigation period is under consideration, ensuring accused is put on notice and given an opportunity to object to the request for an extension.

21. It is mandatory for the accused to be produced before the Court when considering the petition for extension period to complete investigation. The accused must be informed that the issue of extending the investigation period is being considered. If the accused is not given an opportunity to be heard, the requirement to produce the accused becomes a mere formality and loses its legal significance.

22. The Hon'ble Apex Court further held that granting an extension period for completing investigation directly impacts the accused's indefeasible right to default bail. Therefore, the issuance of notice is not a mere procedural formality. The procedures outlined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which protects personal liberty, must be followed, ensuring that the process is fair and reasonable. Failing to produce the accused before the Court, either physically or virtually, and failing to



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inform them of the Special Public Prosecutor's petition for extension period, constitutes more than a procedural irregularity, it is a serious violation of the accused's rights under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

23. Such a failure is not just an error; it constitutes a gross illegality that infringes upon the constitutional protection guaranteed to the accused. Therefore, the prejudice is presumed and does not need to be demonstrated by the accused. Further, the Hon'ble Apex Court mandated that the Public Prosecutor must file a report at least a week before the statutory period expires, allowing the accused sufficient time to review the contents and oppose the extension if they wish to do so under the law.

24. In this case, the notice was admittedly served on the 178th day, on 10.09.2024. This clearly constitutes a violation of the mandatory requirement, as the accused's right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India has been denied. Considering the facts of the case, the grant of extension period to complete investigation without adhering to the procedural safeguards established by the Constitution Bench and various



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decisions of the Hon'ble Apex Court, has deprived the accused of his right to seek default bail, leading to a failure of justice. Hence, the decision to grant extension period for completing the investigation is improper and vitiated.

25. In view of the above, the impugned order dated 21.09.2024 is set aside and the petitioner's statutory bail petition in Crl.M.P.No.10286 of 2024 is hereby revived. The trial Court to pass appropriate orders on the petitioner's statutory bail petition in Crl.M.P.No.10286 of 2024. Accordingly, this Criminal Revision is allowed.

Index : Yes/ No
Neutral Citation: Yes / No
Speaking Order / Non-Speaking Order

31.01.2025

To

- 1.The Principal Special Judge,
Special Court for EC and NDPS Act cases,
Chennai.
- 2.The Inspector of Police,
T-7, Tank Factory Police Station,
Chennai.



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3.The Public Prosecutor,
High Court,
Madras.