

CRM-M-13434-2025

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-13434-2025
Reserved on: 06.05.2025
Pronounced on: 15.05.2025

Raj Kaur ...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab ...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ANOOP CHITKARA

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

Mr. Sukhwinder Singh Rai, DAG, Punjab.

ANOOP CHITKARA, J.

FIR No.	Dated	Police Station	Sections
41	06.08.2023	Cheema, District Sangrur	22 & 29 of NDPS Act

1. The petitioner incarcerated in the FIR captioned above had come up before this Court under Section 483 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, [BNSS], seeking regular bail.

2. Per paragraph 11 of the bail petition and para 7E of the status report, the accused has the following criminal antecedents:

Sr. No.	FIR No.	Date	Offenses	Police Station
1	36	03.07.2022	22 & 29 of NDPS Act	Dharamgarh, District Sangrur
2	48	01.06.2022	22 & 29 of NDPS Act	Cheema, District Sangrur
3	68	27.08.2017	15 of NDPS Act	Dharamgarh, District Sangrur

3. The facts and allegations are taken from the reply dated 04.04.2025 filed by the State. On 04.04.2025 based on secret information, the Police recovered 850 intoxicant tablets containing tramadol from the petitioner’s possession. The Investigator claims to have complied with all the statutory requirements of the NDPS Act, 1985, and BNSS 2023

4. The petitioner's counsel seeks bail on the grounds of prolonged pretrial custody. Petitioner’s counsel also submits that petitioner’s case is fully covered with the judgment

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passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in *Junaid Alam v. State of Uttarakhand*, decided on 12 Aug 2024, SLP(Crl.) 7708-2024. Counsel further prays for bail by imposing any stringent conditions and contends that further pre-trial incarceration would cause an irreversible injustice to the petitioner and their family.

5. The State's counsel opposes bail and refers to relevant portion of the reply, which reads as follows:

“B. THE EVIDENCE BASED ON WHICH THE PETITIONER WAS ARRAIGNED AS AN ACCUSED

That the present FIR was registered against accused/petitioner Raj Kaur on the basis of secret information received by ASI Rajinder Singh, who apprehended Raj Kaur (petitioner), she was arrested and recovery of 850 intoxicant tablets Tramadol Prolonged Release was effected from her possession. So, Raj Kaur (present petitioner) was arraigned as an accused in this case.

C.THE EVIDENCE AGAINST THE PETITIONER.

That the present FIR was registered against accused/petitioner Raj Kaur on the basis of secret information received by ASI Rajinder Singh and she was apprehended and arrested by the said ASI and recovery of 850 intoxicant tablets Tramadol Prolonged Release was effected from her possession.As per report No.2546/2023/Toxi/FSL/Pb dated 18.09.2023, the ingredients found present in the parcel was reported as "Tramadol Hydrochloride". So, there is sufficient evidence against the petitioner.

D.THE ROLE OF THE PETITIONER.

That the present FIR was registered against accused/petitioner Raj Kaur on the basis of secret information received by ASI Rajinder Singh. During investigation accused Raj Kaur was arrested at the spot by ASI Rajinder Singh and recovery of 850 intoxicant tablets Tramatrast SR 100 (Tramadol Prolonged-release Tablets L.P 100 mg)was effected from her possession. During interrogation accused Raj Kaur disclosed that the intoxicant tablets which have been recovered from her possession that were supplied to her by her co-accused Vicky Singh by visiting nearby her house. On the

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basis of above said disclosure made by accused Raj Kaur, Vicky Singh was nominated as an accused in this case u/s 29 NDPS Act on 08.08.2023 vide DDR No.13 and he was arrested on 06.08.2024. During interrogation he disclosed that, "850 intoxicant tablets which were recovered from his co-accused Raj Kaur that were supplied to her by me by visiting nearby her house."So, a specific role is attributed to the petitioner in the commission of present offence."

REASONING:

6. As per para 7(A) of reply, the name of drug is Pyeevon, and it contains Tramadol weighing 323 grams.

7. The quantity allegedly involved in this case is commercial. Given this, the rigors of S. 37 of the NDPS Act apply in the present case. The petitioner must satisfy the twin conditions put in place by the Legislature under Section 37 of the NDPS Act.

8. The petitioner is nor entitled to bail with ***Junaid Alam (supra)*** because Hon'ble Supreme Court, in Junaid Alam v. State of Uttarakhand, had granted bail, on prolonged custody, but there is no reference about the accused's criminal antecedents.

9. In Junaid Alam v. State of Uttarakhand, decided on 12 Aug 2024, SLP(Crl.) 7708-2024, Hon'ble Supreme Court holds,

[2]. It is pointed out that the petitioner has been in custody for last more than 18 months since he was arrested on 25.01.2023. It is then submitted that only 3 out of the 10 cited prosecution witnesses have been examined and they have not said anything to connect the petitioner with the crime.

[3]. The learned counsel for the State would submit that the concerned Contraband are medicinal drugs but they are sold for profit. Moreover, it is of commercial quantity.

[4]. We have perused the nature of the Contraband i.e., the prohibited medicines (SYP Codectus 100 Bottles (100 Ml each), Cap Pyeevon Spas Plus 720 Cap Parvion Spas 800 Capsules, Spasonof NF 960 capsules, Capsules Spasmoproxyvon Plus 144, Proxywell Spas 2568 Capsules, Alprasaft Table 600 Tablets, Pyeevon Spas Plus 32 Capsules).

[5]. Having considered the above and the fact that the trial is unlikely to conclude on a near date, we are of the view that the petitioner – Junaid Alam deserves to be granted bail. It is ordered accordingly. Appropriate bail conditions be imposed by the trial court.

10. Petitioner's counsel has not cited any judicial precedent where the Hon'ble

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Supreme Court of India had granted bail to the accused where quantity is closure to the present case along with the criminal history of NDPS cases, as such petitioner is not entitled to bail.

11. Section 37¹ of the NDPS Act mandates under sub-section (1) (b) of section 37 that no person accused of an offense punishable for offenses involving commercial quantity shall be released on bail unless- (i) the Public Prosecutor has been given an opportunity to oppose the application of release, and (ii) where the Public Prosecutor opposes the application, the Court is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that accused is not guilty of such offense and is not likely to commit any offense while on bail. Thus, the rigors of S. 37 of the NDPS Act apply in the present case, and the burden is on the petitioner to satisfy the twin conditions put in place by the Legislature under Section 37 of the NDPS Act. Given the legislative mandate of S. 37 of the NDPS Act, the Court can release a person accused of an offense punishable under the NDPS Act for possessing a commercial quantity of contraband only after recording reasonable satisfaction of its rigors.

12. The State's Counsel argues that a plain reading of Section 37 reveals that the legislature intends to make the law stringent to curb the drug menace. It is further to be noticed that the provisions are couched in negative language, meaning that to grant bail, the Court needs to record a finding that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the petitioner is not guilty of the offense. The burden of proof is also on the petitioner to satisfy the Court about his non-involvement in the case. While interpreting the provisions of Section 37 of the NDPS Act, the Court must be guided by the objective sought to be achieved by putting these stringent conditions.

13. Satisfying the fetters of S. 37 of the NDPS Act is candling the infertile eggs. The stringent conditions of section 37 placed in the statute by the legislature do not create a bar for bail for specified categories, including the commercial quantity; however, it creates hurdles by placing a reverse burden on the accused, and once crossed, the rigors no more exist, and the factors for bail become similar to the bail petitions under general penal statutes like IPC. Thus, both the twin conditions need to be satisfied before a person accused of possessing a commercial quantity of drugs or psychotropic substance is to be released on bail. The first condition is to provide an opportunity to the Public

¹ **37. Offences to be cognizable and non-bailable.**—(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974),—

(a) every offence punishable under this Act shall be cognizable;

(b) no person accused of an offence punishable for offences under section 19 or section 24 or section 27A and also for offences involving commercial quantity shall be released on bail or on his own bond unless—

(i) the Public Prosecutor has been given an opportunity to oppose the application for such release, and (ii) where the Public Prosecutor opposes the application, the court is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that he is not guilty of such offence and that he is not likely to commit any offence while on bail.

(2) The limitations on granting of bail specified in clause (b) of sub-section (1) are in addition to the limitations under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974) or any other law for the time being in force on granting of bail.

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Prosecutor, enabling them to take a stand on the bail application. The second stipulation is that the Court must be satisfied that reasonable grounds exist for believing that the accused is not guilty of such an offense and is not likely to commit any offense while on bail. If either of these conditions is not met, the ban on granting bail operates. The expression “reasonable grounds” means something more than prima facie grounds. It contemplates substantial probable causes for believing the accused is not guilty of the alleged offense. Even on fulfilling one of the conditions, the reasonable grounds for believing that the accused is not guilty of such an offense, the Court still cannot give a finding on the assurance that the accused is not likely to commit any such crime again.

14. The petitioner’s arguments did not point toward any material contradictions.

15. The submissions made above and the grounds in the bail petition do not shift the burden the legislature places on the accused under S. 37 of the NDPS Act. The petitioner has not stated anything in the bail petition to discharge the burden put by the stringent conditions placed in the statute by the legislature under section 37 of the NDPS Act. The investigation reveals sufficient prima facie evidence to connect the petitioner with the crime; thus, the petitioner fails to make out a case for bail. Any detailed discussions about the evidence may prejudice the case of the petitioner, the State, or the other accused.

16. Per the custody certificate dated 07.04.2025, the petitioner's custody is 01 year 07 months & 30 days, which cannot be considered prolonged.

17. In Union of India (NCB) v. Khalil Uddin, decided on 21 Oct 2022, 2022 SCC OnLine SC 2109, Hon’ble Supreme Court holds,

[4]. According to the prosecution, contraband material weighing about 13 kgs. of morphine was found in a motor vehicle which was driven by co-accused named Md. Jakir Hussain. During the course of investigation, it was found that the motor vehicle was recorded in the name of Md. Nizam Uddin who had executed a sale letter and handed over the custody of the vehicle to accused Md. Abdul Hai and that accused Md. Jakir Hussain was the driver employed by accused Md. Abdul Hai and that contraband material in question was to be handed over to accused-Khalil Uddin, an owner of a tea shop.

[5]. The High Court by its order which is presently under challenge, directed release of both the accused as stated above on bail after they had undergone custody to the tune of about a year. Questioning grant of relief to said accused, the instant appeals have been preferred.

[7]. What emerges from the record is that large quantity of contraband weighing about 13 kgs of morphine was found in a car which was driven by Md. Jakir Hussain. Whether the role played by said Md. Jakir Hussain could get connected with both the accused is a question.

[8]. The answer to said question could be the statement recorded of Md. Nizam Uddin. The statement of Md. Jakir Hussain recorded

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under Section 67 of the Act has also named his owner accused Abdul Hai. We are conscious of the fact that the validity and scope of such statements under Section 67 has been pronounced upon by this Court in *Tofan Singh v. State of Tamil Nadu*. In *State by (NCB) Bengaluru v. Pallulabid Ahmad Arimutta*, the rigour of law lay down by this Court in *Tofan Singh* was held to be applicable even at the stage of grant of bail.

[9]. However, going by the circumstances on record, at this stage, on the strength of the statement of Md. Nizam Uddin, though allegedly retracted later, the matter stands on a different footing. In our considered view, in the face of the mandate of Section 37 of the Act, the High Court could not and ought not to have released the accused on bail. We, therefore, allow these appeals, set aside the view taken by the High Court and direct that both the appellants be taken in custody forthwith.

[10]. We have been given to understand that the charge-sheet has been filed. In the circumstances, we direct the Trial Court to take up the matter and conclude the proceedings as early as possible and preferably within six months from the receipt of this order.

18. In *Narayan Takri v. State of Odisha*, decided on 10 Sep 2024, SLP (Crl.) 8198-2024, Hon'ble Supreme Court holds,

The petitioners are in custody since 28th May, 2022 for alleged commission of alleged offence under Section 20(b)(ii)(c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. As per the FIR allegation, 125.3 kg. of "Ganja" was recovered from the petitioners.

[3]. It is not in dispute that the trial has commenced and that three prosecution witnesses have been examined till date.

[4]. Learned counsel for the petitioners submits that the third prosecution witness was examined as far back as on 28th January, 2024 and since then, no other prosecution witness has been examined. There is, however, no such averment in the petition.

[5]. Learned counsel appearing for the respondent submits that every endeavor shall be made on behalf of the prosecution to have all the witnesses examined by the end of this year.

[6]. The trial court is encouraged to expedite the trial and give its decision as early as possible, in accordance with law.

[7]. We, however, do not see any reason to interfere the impugned judgment and order at this stage; however, it is clarified that in the event the trial is not completed by the end of this year, the petitioners shall be at liberty to renew their prayer for bail before the trial court.

19. A perusal of the bail petition and the documents attached prima facie points towards the petitioner's involvement and does not make out a case for bail. The impact of crime would also not justify bail. Any further discussions will likely prejudice the petitioner; this court refrains from doing so.

20. The petitioner's custody of around 01 year & 08 months cannot be termed

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prolonged, given the minimum sentence prescribed for the offense.

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

22. Petition dismissed. Liberty reserved to the petitioner to file fresh bail petition after citing judicial precedents, where the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India had granted bail to the accused in the similar circumstances as in the present case. All pending applications, if any, stand disposed of.

(ANOOP CHITKARA)
JUDGE

15.05.2025
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Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes
Whether reportable: No.