



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

**CRM-A-2330-MA-2018
Date of decision: 01.05.2025**

PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

...APPLICANT/APPELLANT

VERSUS

M/S. JASHAN AUTOMOBILES AND ORS.

...RESPONDENTS

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL.

Present: Mr. Atul Gaur, Advocate
Amicus Curiae and
Mr. Gaurav Goel, Advocate for the applicant-appellant.

SANDEEP MOUDGIL, J. (ORALb)

1. The present application has been filed under Section 378 (4) of Cr.P.C. against the order dated 21.05.2018 passed by learned Judicial Magistrate Ist Class, Rajpura vide which a complaint bearing No. COMA/620-2015 titled as 'PNB vs. Jashan Automobiles' filed under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 (hereinafter referred as NI Act) was dismissed for want of prosecution.

2. For the reasons stated in this application, the same is allowed. Leave to appeal granted.

3. Registry is directed to assign an appeal number to the case.

4. Learned counsel for the appellant submits, inter alia, that the learned Trial Court has erroneously dismissed the appellant-complainant's complaint for non-prosecution. It is contended that the appellant was diligently attending the proceedings before the Trial Court, whereas it was the

respondents-accused who were causing undue delay by seeking repeated adjournments on various pretexts. The case was adjourned on multiple occasions for the appearance of the accused, who failed to appear and instead moved an application for personal exemption, which was allowed by the Trial Court. However, on the subsequent date of hearing, the accused again failed to appear. Consequently, the Trial Court cancelled the bail bonds of the accused and issued non-bailable warrants against him. Despite further opportunities, the accused did not appear, and was ultimately declared a proclaimed offender on 21.05.2018. In view of the proclamation against the accused, the appellant was under the bona fide impression that his further presence before the Trial Court was not required. Hence, the non-appearance of the appellant was neither willful nor deliberate, but occurred due to the aforesaid circumstances.

5. Heard.

6. The trial Court has dismissed the complaint in the absence of the learned counsel for the complainant. When the applicant became aware of the fact that his complaint had been dismissed in the absence of the advocate for the applicant and he was never intimated about the same by his counsel. Observing the fact that the Trial Court had failed to apply its *judicious* mind and has just casually dismissed the case for want of prosecution by observing that the case was called for several times and nobody turned up, therefore, dismissed the complaint for want of prosecution, which is sufficient for this Court to infer that the Court below should have at least summoned the applicant and would have given a fair hearing so that either of the parties should not have suffered any prejudice and rather has adopted a very callous approach.

7. The disturbing feature of the case is that under our present adversary legal system where the parties generally appear through their advocates, the obligation of the parties is to select his advocate, brief him, pay the fees demanded by him and then trust the learned advocate to do the rest of the things. The party may be a villager or may belong to a rural area and may have no knowledge of the court's procedure. After engaging a lawyer, the party may remain supremely confident that the lawyer will look after his interest. At the time of the hearing of petition, the personal appearance of the party is not only not required but hardly useful. Therefore, the party having done everything in his power to effectively participate in the proceedings can rest assured that he has neither to go to the Court to inquire as to what is happening in the Court with regard to his case nor is he to act as a watchdog of the advocate that the latter appears in the matter when it is listed. It is no part of his job. What is the fault of the party who having done everything in his power and expected of him would suffer because of the default of his advocate. The problem that agitates is whether it is proper that the party should suffer for the inaction, deliberate omission, or misdemeanour of his agent. The answer obviously is in the negative.

8. Recently, Hon'ble Division Bench of the Apex Court in "**Ranjit Sarkar vs. Ravi Ganesh Bharadwaj and others**" in Criminal Appeal No. 1593 of 2025 (Arising Out of SLP (Crl.) No. 205 of 2025) decided on 17.03.2025, categorically held that dismissal of a complaint would not mechanically result in acquittal. Speaking through Justice Dipankar Datta, opined as follows:

"18. Chapter XX of the Cr. PC is titled Trial Of Summons-Cases By Magistrates. It has 8 (eight) sections from Section 251 to 259. Section 254 lays down the procedure to be followed if conviction is not

recorded in terms of Sections 252 and 253. An acquittal can be recorded by a magistrate under Section 255, Cr. PC, if considering the evidence, it is found that the accused is not guilty. An acquittal can also be recorded by the magistrate under Section 256, Cr. PC, without considering the evidence on record, in the stated situations. Section 256 of the Cr. PC reads as follows:

"256. Non-appearance or death of complainant-(1) If the summons has been issued on complaint, and on the day appointed for the appearance of the accused, or any day subsequent thereto to which the hearing may be adjourned, the complainant does not appear, the Magistrate shall, notwithstanding anything hereinbefore contained, acquit the accused, unless for some reason he thinks it proper to adjourn the hearing of the case to some other day:

Provided that where the complainant is represented by a pleader or by the officer conducting the prosecution or where the Magistrate is of opinion that the personal attendance of the complainant is not necessary, the Magistrate may dispense with his attendance and proceed with the case.

(2) The provisions of sub-section (1) shall, so far as may be, apply also to cases where the non-appearance of the complainant is due to his death".

19. What, therefore, assumes importance for invoking Section 256, Cr.PC is the purpose for which the case is fixed. If the date is not appointed for appearance of the accused but for some other purpose, like in the present case, acquittal of the accused does not necessarily follow as the logical result of absence of the complainant. Also, the words "on any day subsequent thereto" must be understood in reference to the words preceding, namely, "the day appointed for the appearance of the accused". Say, for instance, if a date is fixed by the magistrate for bringing an order from a superior court or for showing cause why an order of dismissal should not be passed for continuous absence of the complainant or for producing any material, which is not intrinsically connected with any step towards progress of the lis, and the complainant is found to be absent, a dismissal of the complaint can be ordered but the provision for acquitting the accused may not be attracted unless it happens to be the date appointed for appearance of the accused and they do appear personally or through an advocate; **also, without the magistrate recording a clear acquittal along with the order of dismissal of the complaint, acquittal need not be read into every such order of dismissal of a complaint owing to absence of the complainant.**" (emphasis added)

9. This court is of the view that by remanding back the present complaint to the Court concerned would not prejudice either party. Instead, it ensures that the case is decided on its merits, with all relevant evidence considered. This approach aligns with the principles of natural justice,

especially the rule of *audi alteram partem* (no one should be condemned unheard).

10. In light of the foregoing discussion, it is held that the Trial Court adopted a casual and overly technical approach in dismissing the petitioner's complaint, without duly appreciating that procedural rules are intended to serve the cause of justice, not to obstruct it. These rules are meant to facilitate the fair administration of justice, and should not be applied in a manner that defeats its very purpose. Accordingly, this Court is of the considered view that remanding the matter back to the Trial Court will not cause prejudice to either party; rather, it will aid in the effective adjudication of the case and serve the ends of justice.

11. In view of the discussions above, this Court finds force in the arguments made by the learned counsel for the appellant. Accordingly, the present petition is disposed of in the following terms:

- i. The impugned order dated 21.05.20218 passed by learned Judicial Magistrate Ist Class, Rajpura, is set aside.
- ii. The learned trial Court is directed to decide the complaint afresh after affording due opportunities to the parties.
- iii. The complaint (*supra*) is ordered to be restored to its original number at the stage from where it was dismissed by the learned trial Court and the said Court is directed to proceed further strictly as per law, after giving notice to the parties concerned.

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)
JUDGE

01.05. 2025
anuradha (a)

(i)	Whether speaking/reasoned	:	Yes/No
(ii)	Whether reportable	:	Yes/No