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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

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CRM-M-56511-2025

Date of decision: 10th December, 2025

Harpal Singh @ Bhalla

...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANISHA BATRA

Present: Mr. Rishu Mahajan, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr. Roshandeep Singh, Assistant Advocate General, Punjab.

MANISHA BATRA, J (ORAL):-

The instant one is the second petition filed under Section 483 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (for short 'BNSS') by the petitioner seeking grant of regular bail in case bearing FIR No. 133 dated 15.11.2023 registered under Sections 21 and 29 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act, 1985 (for short 'NDPS Act') at Police Station Kathunangal, District Amritsar, on the allegations that on 15.11.2023, the accused Baljinder Singh @ Binda was apprehended by a police party and 05 grams of heroin was recovered from him. He suffered disclosure statement on the basis of which, the present petitioner was nominated as an additional accused. He was arrested on 16.11.2023 and recovery of commercial quantity of contraband i.e. 265 grams of heroin was effected at his instance.

Investigation now stands concluded. The petitioner along with the co-accused

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is facing trial for commission of aforementioned offences. The previous petition as filed by him had been dismissed vide order dated 07.05.2025.

2. It is argued by learned counsel for the petitioner that he has been falsely implicated in this case and a false recovery has been planted upon him. He is in custody for a period of two years. There is prolonged pendency of the trial in the present case, and there is no likelihood of its conclusion in the near future, particularly as not even a single prosecution witness has been examined so far. Trial has also not progressed since the date of dismissal of his previous petition. The extended period of his incarceration is a sufficient and new ground to seek concession of bail to him. His continued detention would not serve any useful purpose. With these broad submissions, it is urged that the petition deserves to be allowed.

3. Status report and custody certificate have been filed by respondent-State. It is argued by learned State counsel that taking into consideration the antecedents of the petitioner and the fact that commercial quantity of the contraband was recovered at his instance, the petitioner does not deserve to be released on bail. Therefore, it is stressed that the petition does not deserve to be allowed.

4. This Court has heard learned counsel for the parties at considerable length.

5. The petitioner is alleged to be found in conscious possession of commercial quantity of contraband. He is in custody since 18.11.2023 and has spent a period of more than two years. Obviously the trial is likely to take time to conclude. It is well settled proposition of law that grant of bail on account

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of delay in trial and long period of incarceration is to be considered in the light of Section 37 of the NDPS Act. Reliance in this regard can be placed upon the observations made by Hon'ble Apex Court in ***Mohd. Muslim @ Hussain v. State (NCT of Delhi), 2023 SCC OnLine SC 352***, wherein it was held that grant of bail on account of undue delay in trial cannot be said to be fettered under Section 37 of the NDPS Act, given the imperative of Section 436-A of Cr.P.C. which is applicable to offence under the Act. It was also observed that jails are overcrowded and their living conditions are, more often than not, appalling. The danger of unjustified imprisonment is that inmates are more likely to be hardened rather than reformed. Reliance can also be placed upon ***Manmandal and Another v. State of West Bengal, Special Leave Petition (Criminal) No.8656 of 2023 decided on 14.09.2023 and Rabi Prakash v. State of Odisha, 2023 SCC Online SC 110***, wherein the Hon'ble Supreme Court had extended benefit of bail to the accused who had been incarcerated for a long period by observing that prolonged incarceration militated against the most precious fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution and in such a situation, the constitutional principles must override the statutory embargo contained under Section 37 of the NDPS Act.

6. Reliance can also be placed upon ***Santosh Pawar Vs. State of Chhattishgarh & Anr., Criminal Appeal No.4883/2025***, which is a recently pronounced verdict of Hon'ble Supreme Court observing that rigours of Section 37 of NDPS Act will not be a bar for considering the case of an accused for bail as it comes with a condition that the prosecution would press for an early completion of trial. In the above-mentioned case the Hon'ble

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Supreme Court of India held that appellant who was being prosecuted for being in possession of commercial quantity of narcotic substance, was entitled for bail in view of her incarceration for a period of 19 months.

7. Similarly in another case i.e. in the case of ***Satender Kumar Antil v. Central Bureau of Investigation, (2022) 10 SCC 51*** prolonged incarceration and inordinate delay engaged the attention of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, which considered the correct approach towards bail, with respect to several enactments, including Section 37 NDPS Act. The court expressed the opinion that Section 436A (which requires inter alia the accused to be enlarged on bail if the trial is not concluded within specified periods) of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 would apply.

8. In the case of ***Ismail Khan @ Pathan vs. State of Rajasthan Crminal Appeal No.4911 of 2025*** with regard to recovery of commercial quantity of narcotic substance, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India accorded the benefit of bail to the accused in view of prolonged incarceration for a period of 02 years and 08 months of the accused.

9. The similar benefit has been taken in another appeal i.e. ***SLP No.15699-2025 titled as Ebrahim @ Ibrahim SK vs. The State of West Bengal*** and in the case of ***Pamesh Arora vs. UT Chandigarh Criminal Appeal No.4872 of 2025***.

10. On analyzing the peculiar facts and circumstances of the present case in the light of the aforementioned principles of law, it transpires that the petitioner has suffered prolonged incarceration for a period of two years and twenty-five days, the trial is not likely to be concluded in near future as all the

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prosecution witnesses are yet to be examined; the continued detention of the petitioner is not likely to serve any fruitful purpose; there is nothing on record to show that if released on bail, the petitioner will not participate in the trial or will abscond.

11. In view of the above discussion, this Court is of the opinion that a case is made out for grant of bail to the petitioner at this stage. Accordingly, the petition is allowed and the petitioner is ordered to be released on bail on his furnishing personal as well as surety bonds to the satisfaction of the learned trial Court, and subject to the condition that he shall not directly or indirectly make any inducement, threat or promise to any person acquainted with the facts of the case. He shall appear before the learned trial Court on each and every date of hearing except when his presence has been exempted by the trial Court. He shall surrender his passport, if any, furnish details of his cell phone and Aadhaar card, and shall not change his mobile number(s) during the pendency of the trial.

12. It is clarified that the observations made above shall not be construed as an expression of opinion of this Court on the merits of the case and shall not influence the outcome of the trial in any manner.

13. Since the main petition has already been decided, pending application, if any, is rendered infructuous.

[MANISHA BATRA]
JUDGE

10th December, 2025
Parveen Sharma

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| 1. Whether speaking/ reasoned | : | Yes / No |
| 2. Whether reportable | : | Yes / No |