

2025:PHHC:043452



**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH**
218

Date of decision: 01.04.2025

1. CRM-M-63888-2024

Ravinder Singh
State of Punjab
Versus
....Petitioner
....Respondent

2. CRM-M-34816-2024

Jassa Singh @ Moong
State of Punjab
Versus
....Petitioner
....Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Parminder Singh Sekhon, Advocate
with Mr. Kaushal Chahal, Advocate
for the petitioner in CRM-M-63888-2024.

Mr. Imaan Singh Khara, Advocate
with Mr. Gurmej Singh, Advocate
for the petitioner in CRM-M-34816-2024.

Mr. Sandeep Kumar, DAG, Punjab.

HARPREET SINGH BRAR J. (Oral)

1. Vide this common order, I intend to dispose of CRM-M Nos.63888 and 34816 of 2024, as common questions of law and facts are involved for adjudication. For the sake of convenience, facts are taken from CRM-M-63888-2024.
2. Prayer in both these petitions filed under Section 483 of BNSS, 2023 (erstwhile Section 439 of Cr.P.C.) is for grant of regular

2025:PHHC:043452



bail to the petitioner(s) namely Ravinder Singh and Jassa Singh @ Moong in FIR No.68 dated 26.08.2023 registered under Section 22 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (in short 'the NDPS Act') at Police Station Ballianwali, District Bathinda.

3. The brief facts of the case are that on 26.08.2023, two persons namely Ravinder Singh and Jagga Singh @ Mangu were arrested by the police for keeping in possession 1400 tables of Tramacel-100 (Tramadol) without any permit or license and during the course of investigation, 250 more tablets were recovered from the possession of said accused Ravinder Singh, on the basis of the disclosure statement made by him. Subsequently, the FIR (supra) was registered.

4. Learned counsel for the petitioner (in CRM-M-63888-2024) *inter alia* contends that this is the 3rd petition seeking regular bail to the petitioner Ravinder Singh and the earlier petition was dismissed in default on 07.08.2024. He submits that the new ground for filing this petition (CRM-M-63888-2024) is that there is a delay in conclusion of the trial as out of 15 PWs, only 05 PWs have been examined till date and the prosecution has failed to conclude its evidence in spite of passing of more than 01 year and 07 months. Learned counsel for the petitioner(s) submits that the case of the petitioner(s) is squarely covered by the ratio of law laid down in ***Nandlal Mondal @ Abhay Mondal Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP (Crl.) No(s).12788/2023.***

2025:PHHC:043452



5. Learned counsel for the petitioner(s) further submits that the petitioners' case involves certain critical aspects regarding the legality of the seizure and the authenticity of the disclosure statement made by Ravinder Singh, during the course investigation and the trial of the case is likely to take long time in conclusion.

6. *Per contra*, learned State counsel has filed custody certificates today in the Court which is taken on record and he opposes the prayer made by learned counsel for the petitioner(s) on the ground that huge quantity of contraband was recovered from the conscious possession of the petitioner(s), which falls within the ambit of commercial quantity and as such, the petitioner(s) are not entitled for any relief, however, he could not controvert the fact that the petitioner(s) are not involved in any other case.

7. Having heard learned counsel for the parties and after perusing the record of the case, it transpires that the petitioner(s) are behind the bars from the last more than 01 year and 07 months. Investigation is complete. The final report under Section 173 Cr.P.C. was presented before the concerned Court. Charges were framed and trial of the case has not made much progress. Out of 15 prosecution witnesses, 05 PWs have been examined so far.

8. A two Judge bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Nandlal Mondal @ Abhay Mondal's case (supra)***, released the accused on bail after completion of 18 months of custody on account of protracted trial in NDPS case involving commercial quantity of

2025:PHHC:043452



contraband. Reliance in this regard can also be placed upon the judgments rendered by the Hon'ble Supreme Court passed in *Md. Aliul Islam @ Aliul Islam @ Alius Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP (Crl.) No. 000736/2024*, *Debrata Mondal Vs. State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 14970-2023*, *Santarul Islam @ Santa Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 13169/2023*, *Indrajit Mondal @ Piglu Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 8512/2023*, *Narjul Islam @ Najbul Hoque Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 14172/2023*, *Subhashri Das @ Rana @ Subhoshree Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No.15284/2023*, *Mithun Sk. & Anr. Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP (Crl.) No.016598/2023*, *SK. Nasiruddin @ Nasirddin SK. Vs. State of West Bengal SLP (Crl.) No.003402/2024*, *Indadul Shah Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 12670/2023*, *Hanef Kharsani @ Hanef Sheikh Vs. Union of India, Ripon Seikh & Ors. Vs. State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 16663/2023*, *Moidul Sarkar Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 15668/ 2023*, *Saniya Bibi @ Soniya Bibi Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 2354/2024*, *Saddam Hossain Vs. State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 15496/2023*, *Bijon SK @ Golam Murselim Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP (Crl.) No. 6046/2024* and *Subhas Vs. The State of West Bengal SLP(Crl.) No. 8823/2019*.

9. Further, the culpability, if any, would be determined at the time of trial and as such, no useful purpose will be served by further detention of the petitioner(s)-accused. Keeping the petitioners in further

2025:PHHC:043452



detention without the prospect of the trial being concluded in the near future, would be violative of their rights under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. A two Judge bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Mohd. Muslim @ Hussain vs. State (NCT of Delhi) 2023 AIR SC 1648*, has held that the concept of fairness enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India would trump the bar on granting bail in cases involving commercial quantity of contraband, as stipulated by Section 37 of the NDPS Act. Speaking through Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, has opined as follows:

“20. The standard to be considered therefore, is one, where the court would look at the material in a broad manner, and reasonably see whether the accused's guilt may be proved. The judgments of this court have, therefore, emphasized that the satisfaction which courts are expected to record, i.e., that the accused may not be guilty, is only prima facie, based on a reasonable reading, which does not call for meticulous examination of the materials collected during investigation (as held in Union of India v. Rattan Malik). Grant of bail on ground of undue delay in trial, cannot be said to be fettered by Section 37 of the Act, given the imperative of Section 436A which is applicable to offences under the NDPS Act too (ref. Satender Kumar Antil supra). Having regard to these factors the court is of the opinion that in the facts of this case, the appellant deserves to be enlarged on bail.

21. Before parting, it would be important to reflect that laws which impose stringent conditions for grant of bail, may be necessary in public interest; yet, if trials are not concluded in time, the injustice wrecked on the individual

2025:PHHC:043452



is immeasurable. *Jails are overcrowded and their living conditions, more often than not, appalling.*” (emphasis added)

10. A two Judge Bench of Hon’ble Supreme Court in **“*Satender Kumar Antil vs. CBI*”, (2022) 10 SCC 51**, with respect to prevailing conditions of undertrial prisoner in India has observed:

“6. Jails in India are flooded with undertrial prisoners. The statistics placed before us would indicate that more than 2/3rd of the inmates of the prisons constitute undertrial prisoners. Of this category of prisoners, majority may not even be required to be arrested despite registration of a cognizable offence, being charged with offences punishable for seven years or less. They are not only poor and illiterate but also would include women. Thus, there is a culture of offence being inherited by many of them. As observed by this Court, it certainly exhibits the mindset, a vestige of colonial India, on the part of the investigating agency, notwithstanding the fact arrest is a draconian measure resulting in curtailment of liberty, and thus to be used sparingly. In a democracy, there can never be an impression that it is a police State as both are conceptually opposite to each other.”

11. In view the discussion above, the present petitions are allowed. Accordingly, without commenting upon the merits of the case, the petitioner(s) namely Ravinder Singh and Jassa Singh @ Moong are ordered to be released on regular bail during pendency of the trial, on their furnishing bail bonds/surety bonds to the satisfaction of Illaqa Magistrate/trial Court/Duty Magistrate.

2025:PHHC:043452



12. Nothing observed hereinabove shall be construed to be expression of an opinion by this Court on merits of the case. The learned Court below is directed to proceed with the matter on its own merits, lest it may prejudice the trial.

13. A photocopy of this order be placed on the file of other connected case.

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

01.04.2025
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Whether speaking/reasoned:	Yes/No
Whether reportable:	Yes/No