IN THE HIGH COURT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH, SHIMLA

Cr. MP(M) No. 2246 of 2026
Reserved on: 20.11.2026
Date of Decision: ___.11.2026.

Palwinder Singh .... Petitioner

Versus

State of HP .... Respondent

Coram
Hon'ble Mr Justice Rakesh Kainthla, Judge.
Whether approved for reporting?[1] No.

For the Petitioner : Mr Harsh Vardhan, Advocate, vice Mr Sushant Veer Singh Thakur, Advocate.

For the Respondent/State : Mr Ajit Sharma, Deputy Advocate General.

Rakesh Kainthla, Judge

The petitioner has filed the present petition seeking regular bail in FIR No. 06 of 2026, dated 19.01.2026, registered at Police Station Dhalli, District Shimla, H.P., for the commission of offences punishable under Sections 20 and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

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[1] Whether reporters of Local Papers may be allowed to see the judgment? Yes.

2. It has been asserted that, as per the prosecution, the police received secret information on 19.01.2026 that Palwinder Singh (the present petitioner) and Chet Ram were selling charas near Vidyapeeth Hill Grove School on Dhalli-Malyana bypass road in a vehicle bearing registration number HP-63D-9903, and a huge quantity of contraband could be recovered by the search. The police joined independent witnesses and reached the spot where the vehicle was found parked on the roadside. The police searched the vehicle and recovered 106.420 grams of charas from it. The petitioner, Palwinder Singh, was sitting on the driver's seat. The police arrested the petitioner and the co-accused. The co-accused disclosed during the interrogation that he had prepared the charas by collecting the resin from the forest. The police filed the charge-sheet before the Court after the completion of the investigation. The allegations against the petitioner are false, and there is no material to connect the petitioner to the commission of the crime. The co-accused admitted that he had prepared the charas, and the petitioner's involvement is not made out. The police have completed the investigation, and the petitioner's custodial interrogation is not required. The petitioner would abide by the terms and conditions

that the Court may impose. Hence, it was prayed that the present petition be allowed and the petitioner be released on bail.

3. The petition is opposed by filing a status report asserting that the police received secret information on 19.01.2026 at about 5:00 p.m. that a vehicle bearing registration no. HP-63D-9903 was parked near Vidyapeeth Hill Grove School. Balwinder Singh and Chet Ram were selling charas to the people, which could be recovered by searching the vehicle. The information was credible, and the delay in procuring the search warrant would have led to the destruction of the charas. Hence, the information was reduced to writing and was sent to the supervisory officer through Constable Mohit. The police joined Santosh Kumar and went to the spot where the vehicle bearing registration no. HP-63D-9903 was found parked. The driver identified himself as Balwinder Singh, and the person sitting on the front seat identified himself as Chet Ram. The police searched the vehicle in their presence and in the presence of independent witnesses and recovered a carry bag containing 106.420 grams of charas. The police seized the charas and arrested the occupants of the vehicle. The charas was sent to the FSL, and as per the report of analysis, it was found to be an extract of cannabis and

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sample of charas. FIR no. 31 of 2024, dated 09.03.2024, under Section 379 at Police Station Rampur Bushehar, FIR no. 23 of 2025, dated 02.03.2025, under Sections 21 and 29 of NDPS Act at Police Station Parwanoo, District Solan, H.P. FIR no. 138 of 2025, dated 06.11.2025, under Sections 21 and 29 of NDPS Act at Police Station Dhalli, District Shimla, H.P. and FIR number 143 of 2025, dated 21.11.2025, under Sections 21 and 29 at Police Station Dhalli, District Shimla, H.P., have been registered against the petitioner, which are pending. The petitioner was released on bail in FIR no. 143 of 2025 on 21.11.2025 and was arrested for the commission of the same offence after a short time. He would indulge in the commission of a similar offence in case of his release on bail. The charge-sheet has been filed before the Court, and statements of nine witnesses have been recorded. The statements of twelve witnesses are to be recorded. Hence, the status report.

4. I have heard Mr Harsh Vardhan, learned vice counsel representing the petitioner, and Mr Ajit Sharma, learned Deputy Advocate General for the respondent-State.

5. Mr Harsh Vardhan, learned vice counsel representing the petitioner, submitted that the petitioner is innocent and he was falsely implicated. The quantity of charas stated to have been found in the petitioner's possession is less than commercial, and the rigours of Section 37 of the NDPS Act do not apply to the present case. The petitioner has remained in custody for about 10 months, and no fruitful purpose would be served by detaining the petitioner in custody. The petitioner would abide by the terms and conditions that the Court may impose. Hence, he prayed that the present petition be allowed and the petitioner be released on bail.

6. Mr Ajit Sharma, learned Deputy Advocate General for the respondent-State, submitted that the petitioner was found involved in the commission of similar offences. He indulged in the commission of the crime despite his release on bail with a specific condition that he would not indulge in the commission of a similar offence. The petitioner would indulge in the commission of a similar offence in case of his release on bail. The consumption of charas is adversely affecting society and no leniency should be shown to the petitioner. Hence, he prayed that the present petition be dismissed.

7. I have given considerable thought to the submissions made at the bar and have gone through the records carefully.

8. The parameters for granting bail were considered by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Pinki v. State of U.P., (2025) 7 SCC 314: 2025 SCC OnLine SC 781,*** wherein it was observed at page 380:

> **(*i*) *Broad principles for the grant of bail***
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> **56.** In ***Gudikanti Narasimhulu v. High Court of A.P., (1978) 1 SCC 240: 1978 SCC (Cri) 115***, Krishna Iyer, J., while elaborating on the content of Article 21 of the Constitution of India in the context of personal liberty of a person under trial, has laid down the key factors that should be considered while granting bail, which are extracted as under: (SCC p. 244, paras 7-9)
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> > "7. It is thus obvious that the nature of the charge is the vital factor, and the nature of the evidence is also pertinent. The punishment to which the party may be liable, if convicted or a conviction is confirmed, also bears upon the issue.
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> > *8. Another relevant factor is whether the course of justice would be thwarted by him who seeks the benignant jurisdiction of the Court to be freed for the time being.* [***Patrick Devlin, "The Criminal Prosecution in England"*** (Oxford University Press, London 1960) p. 75 — Modern Law Review, Vol. 81, Jan. 1968, p. 54.]
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> > *9. Thus, the legal principles and practice validate the Court considering the likelihood of the applicant interfering with witnesses for the prosecution or otherwise polluting the process of justice. It is not only traditional but rational, in this context, to enquire into the antecedents of a man who is applying for bail to find whether he has a bad record, particularly a record which suggests that he is likely to commit serious offences while on bail. In regard to*

habituals, it is part of criminological history that a thoughtless bail order has enabled the bailee to exploit the opportunity to inflict further crimes on the members of society. Bail discretion, on the basis of evidence about the criminal record of a defendant, is therefore not an exercise in irrelevance." (emphasis supplied)

57. In ***Prahlad Singh Bhati v. State (NCT of Delhi), (2001) 4 SCC 280: 2001 SCC (Cri) 674***, this Court highlighted various aspects that the courts should keep in mind while dealing with an application seeking bail. The same may be extracted as follows: (SCC pp. 284-85, para 8)

"*8. The jurisdiction to grant bail has to be exercised on the basis of well-settled principles, having regard to the circumstances of each case and not in an arbitrary manner. While granting bail, the court has to keep in mind the nature of accusations, the nature of evidence in support thereof, the severity of the punishment which conviction will entail, the character, behaviour, means and standing of the accused, circumstances which are peculiar to the accused, reasonable possibility of securing the presence of the accused at the trial, reasonable apprehension of the witnesses being tampered with, the larger interests of the public or State and similar other considerations. It has also to be kept in mind that for the purposes of granting the bail the legislature has used the words "reasonable grounds for believing" instead of "the evidence" which means the court dealing with the grant of bail can only satisfy it (sic itself) as to whether there is a genuine case against the accused and that the prosecution will be able to produce prima facie evidence in support of the charge.*" (emphasis supplied)

58. This Court in ***Ram Govind Upadhyay v. Sudarshan Singh, (2002) 3 SCC 598: 2002 SCC (Cri) 688***, speaking through Banerjee, J., emphasised that a court exercising discretion in matters of bail has to undertake the same judiciously. In highlighting that bail should not be granted as a matter of course, bereft of cogent reasoning, this Court observed as follows: (SCC p. 602, para 3)

> "*3. Grant of bail, though being a discretionary order, but, however, calls for the exercise of such a discretion in a judicious manner and not as a matter of course. An order for bail bereft of any cogent reason cannot be sustained. Needless to record, however, that the grant of bail is dependent upon the contextual facts of the matter being dealt with by the court and facts do always vary from case to case. While the placement of the accused in society, though it may be considered by itself, cannot be a guiding factor in the matter of grant of bail, the same should always be coupled with other circumstances warranting the grant of bail. The nature of the offence is one of the basic considerations for the grant of bail — the more heinous is the crime, the greater is the chance of rejection of the bail, though, however, dependent on the factual matrix of the matter.*" (emphasis supplied)

59. In ***Kalyan Chandra Sarkar v. Rajesh Ranjan, (2004) 7 SCC 528: 2004 SCC (Cri) 1977***, this Court held that although it is established that a court considering a bail application cannot undertake a detailed examination of evidence and an elaborate discussion on the merits of the case, yet the court is required to indicate the prima facie reasons justifying the grant of bail.

60. In ***Prasanta Kumar Sarkar v. Ashis Chatterjee, (2010) 14 SCC 496: (2011) 3 SCC (Cri) 765***, this Court observed that where a High Court has granted bail mechanically, the said order would suffer from the vice of non-application of mind, rendering it illegal. This Court held as under with regard to the circumstances under which an order granting bail may be set aside. In doing so, the factors which ought to have guided the Court's decision to grant bail have also been detailed as under: (SCC p. 499, para 9)

> "*9. ... It is trite that this Court does not, normally, interfere with an order passed by the High Court granting or rejecting bail to the accused. However, it is equally incumbent upon the High Court to exercise its discretion judiciously, cautiously and strictly in compliance with the basic principles laid down in a plethora of decisions of this*

Court on the point. It is well settled that, among other circumstances, the factors to be borne in mind while considering an application for bail are:

(*i*) *whether there is any prima facie or reasonable ground to believe that the accused had committed the offence*;

(*ii*) *nature and gravity of the accusation*;

(*iii*) *severity of the punishment in the event of conviction*;

(*iv*) *danger of the accused absconding or fleeing, if released on bail*;

(*v*) *character, behaviour, means, position and standing of the accused*;

(*vi*) *likelihood of the offence being repeated*;

(*vii*) *reasonable apprehension of the witnesses being influenced*; *and*

(*viii*) *danger, of course, of justice being thwarted by grant of bail.*" (emphasis supplied)

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62. One of the judgments of this Court on the aspect of application of mind and requirement of judicious exercise of discretion in arriving at an order granting bail to the accused is ***Brijmani Devi v. Pappu Kumar, (2022) 4 SCC 497 : (2022) 2 SCC (Cri) 170***, wherein a three-Judge Bench of this Court, while setting aside an unreasoned and casual order (***Pappu Kumar v. State of Bihar, 2021 SCC OnLine Pat 2856*** and ***Pappu Singh v. State of Bihar, 2021 SCC OnLine Pat 2857***) of the High Court granting bail to the accused, observed as follows: (***Brijmani Devi v. Pappu Kumar, (2022) 4 SCC 497 : (2022) 2 SCC (Cri) 170***], SCC p. 511, para 35)

"*35. While we are conscious of the fact that liberty of an individual is an invaluable right, at the same time, while considering an application for bail, courts cannot lose sight of the serious nature of the accusations against an accused and the facts that have a bearing in the case, particularly*

> *when the accusations may not be false, frivolous or vexatious in nature but are supported by adequate material brought on record to enable a court to arrive at a prima facie conclusion. While considering an application for the grant of bail, a prima facie conclusion must be supported by reasons and must be arrived at after having regard to the vital facts of the case brought on record. Due consideration must be given to facts suggestive of the nature of crime, the criminal antecedents of the accused, if any, and the nature of punishment that would follow a conviction vis-à-vis the offence(s) alleged against an accused.*" (emphasis supplied)

9. Hon'ble Supreme Court held in ***State of Rajasthan v. Balchand*, *(1977) 4 SCC 308: 1977 SCC (Cri) 594: 1977 SCC OnLine SC 261*** that the normal rule is bail and not jail, except where the gravity of the crime or the heinousness of the offence suggests otherwise. It was observed at page 308:

> **2.** The basic rule may perhaps be tersely put as bail, not jail, except where there are circumstances suggestive of fleeing from justice or thwarting the course of justice or creating other troubles in the shape of repeating offences or intimidating witnesses and the like, by the petitioner who seeks enlargement on bail from the Court. We do not intend to be exhaustive but only illustrative.
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> **3.** It is true that the gravity of the offence involved is likely to induce the petitioner to avoid the course of justice and must weigh with us when considering the question of jail. So also, the heinousness of the crime...."

10. The present petition has to be decided as per the parameters laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

11. The status report mentions that the police searched the vehicle bearing registration number HP-63D-9903 and recovered 106.420 grams of charas from it. The petitioner was occupying the driver's seat and co-accused Chet Ram was occupying the front seat in the vehicle. In ***Madan Lal versus State of H.P. (2003) 7 SCC 465: 2003 SCC (Cri) 1664: 2003 SCC OnLineSC 874*****,** the contraband was recovered from a vehicle, and it was held that all the occupants of the vehicle would be in conscious possession of the contraband. It was observed:

> "19. Whether there was conscious possession has to be determined with reference to the factual backdrop. The facts which can be culled out from the evidence on record are that all the accused persons were travelling in a vehicle, and as noted by the trial court, they were known to each other, and it has not been explained or shown as to how they travelled together from the same destination in a vehicle which was not a public vehicle.
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> 20. Section 20(b) makes possession of contraband articles an offence. Section 20 appears in Chapter IV of the Act, which relates to offences for possession of such articles. It is submitted that to make the possession illicit, there must be conscious possession.
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> 21. It is highlighted that unless the possession was coupled with the requisite mental element, i.e., conscious possession and not mere custody without awareness of the nature of such possession, Section 20 is not attracted.
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> 22. The expression "possession" is a polymorphous term that assumes different colours in different contexts. It may carry different meanings in contextually different

backgrounds. It is impossible, as was observed in the ***Supdt. & Remembrancer of Legal Affairs, W.B. v. Anil Kumar Bhunja [(1979) 4 SCC 274: 1979 SCC (Cri) 1038: AIR 1980 SC 52]*** to work out a completely logical and precise definition of "possession" uniformly applicable to all situations in the context of all statutes.

23. The word "conscious" means awareness of a particular fact. It is a state of mind which is deliberate or intended.

24. As noted in ***Gunwantlal v. State of M.P. [(1972) 2 SCC 194: 1972 SCC (Cri) 678: AIR 1972 SC 1756],*** possession in a given case need not be physical possession but can be constructive, having power and control over the article in the case in question, while the person to whom physical possession is given holds it subject to that power or control.

25. The word "possession" means the legal right to possession (see ***Heath v. Drown [(1972) 2 All ER 561: 1973 AC 498: (1972) 2 WLR 1306 (HL)]***). In an interesting case, it was observed that where a person keeps his firearm in his mother's flat, which is safer than his own home, he must be considered to be in possession of the same. (See ***Sullivan v. Earl of Caithness [(1976) 1 All ER 844: 1976 QB 966: (1976) 2 WLR 361 (QBD)]***.)

26. Once possession is established, the person who claims that it was not a conscious possession has to establish it because how he came to be in possession is within his special knowledge. Section 35 of the Act gives a statutory recognition of this position because of the presumption available in law. Similar is the position in terms of Section 54, where a presumption is also available to be drawn from possession of illicit articles.

27. In the factual scenario of the present case, not only possession but conscious possession has been established. It has not been shown by the accused-appellants that the possession was not conscious in the logical background of Sections 35 and 54 of the Act."

12. Therefore, *prima facie*, the petitioner was in possession of the charas, and the burden would shift upon him to show that his possession was not conscious as per Sections 35 and 54 of the NDPS Act.

13. In the present case, there is no material to show that the petitioner was not found in conscious possession of the charas, and the prosecution version has to be *prima facie* accepted as correct that the petitioner was found in possession of 106.420 grams of charas.

14. It was submitted that, as per the status report, the charas was prepared by the co-accused and the petitioner's involvement is not proved. This submission is only stated to be rejected. It was laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Dipakbhai Jagdishchandra Patel v. State of Gujarat, (2019) 16 SCC 547: (2020) 2 SCC (Cri) 361: 2019 SCC OnLine SC 588,*** that a statement made by an accused during the investigation is barred by Section 162 of Cr.P.C. and cannot be used as a piece of evidence. It was also held that the confession made by the co-accused is inadmissible under Section 25 of the Indian Evidence Act. It was observed at page 568: -

> **44.** Such a person, viz., the person who is named in the FIR, and therefore, the accused in the eyes of the law, can indeed be questioned, and the statement is taken by the police officer. A confession that is made to a police officer would be inadmissible, having regard to Section 25 of the Evidence Act. A confession, which is vitiated under Section 24 of the Evidence Act, would also be inadmissible. A confession, unless it fulfils the test laid down in ***Pakala Narayana Swami [Pakala Narayana Swami v. King Emperor, 1939 SCC OnLine PC 1 : (1938-39) 66 IA 66: AIR 1939 PC 47]*** and as accepted by this Court, may still be used as an admission under Section 21 of the Evidence Act. This, however, is subject to the bar of admissibility of a statement under Section 161 CrPC. Therefore, even if a statement contains an admission, the statement being one under Section 161, it would immediately attract the bar under Section 162 CrPC."

15. Therefore, the statement made by the co-accused is inadmissible, and no advantage can be derived from it by the accused.

16. It was submitted that the petitioner was found in possession of less than a commercial quantity of charas and the rigours of Section 37 of the NDPS Act do not apply to the present case; hence, the petitioner is entitled to bail as a matter of right. This submission is not acceptable. It was laid down by this Court in ***Khushi Ram Gupta v. State of H.P., 2022 SCC OnLine HP 3779,*** that the menace of drug addiction has seriously eroded the fabric

of society, and the release of an accused on bail in NDPS Act cases will send a negative signal to society. It was observed:

> "**8.** The menace of drug addiction, especially in adolescents and students, has seriously eroded the fabric of society, putting the future generation as well as the prospects of future nation-building into serious peril.
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> **9.** It is not a case where the investigating agency is clueless with respect to evidence against the petitioner. Though allegations against the petitioner are yet to be proved in accordance with the law, it cannot be taken singly as a factor to grant bail to the petitioner. Nothing has been placed on record on behalf of the petitioner to divulge how and in what manner he came in contact with the persons who were residents of the State of Himachal Pradesh. Thus, there is sufficient prima facie material to infer the implication of the petitioner in the crime. In such circumstances, the release of the petitioner on bail will send a negative signal in society, which will definitely be detrimental to its interests.
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> **10.** The prima facie involvement of the petitioner in the dangerous trade of contraband cannot be ignored merely on account of the fact that he has no past criminal history. It cannot be guaranteed that there will be re-indulgence by the petitioner in similar activities, in case he is released on bail."

17. Similarly, it was held in ***Bunty Yadav v. State of H.P.,*** *2022 SCC OnLine HP 4996,* that bail cannot be claimed as a matter of right even though the rigours of Section 37 of the NDPS Act do not apply to a case. Each case has to be adjudged on its own facts. It was observed:

> "**6.** The quantity involved in the case is 89.89 grams of heroin and 3.90 grams of MDMA. Such quantity may not technically fall under the category of commercial quantity; nevertheless, such quantity cannot be termed to be less by any stretch of the imagination. The evident nature of commercial transactions and dealing with the contraband aggravates the situation for the petitioner. In a case where Section 37 of the NDPS Act is not applicable, bail cannot be claimed as a matter of right. The fate depends on the facts of each and every case.
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> **7.** The menace of drug addiction, especially in adolescents and students, has seriously eroded the fabric of society, putting the future generation as well as the prospects of future nation-building into serious peril."

18. It was laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Union of India v. Namdeo Ashruba Nakade SLP (Crl.) 9792/2025, decided on 07.11.2025,*** that there is a concerning increase in drug abuse amongst the youth. It was observed: -

> 8. This Court is of the view that the issue of substance abuse has emerged as a global public health crisis in the twenty-first century, affecting every country worldwide, as drug trafficking and addiction have become pervasive. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported in its 2025 World Drug Report that "As at 2023, some 316 million people worldwide had used drugs in the past year, representing an increase over the past decade that outpaces population growth, which indicates a higher prevalence of drug use."
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> 9. In India, there has been a concerning increase in drug abuse among the youth. Substance abuse not only affects individuals, families, and communities but also undermines various aspects of health, including physical, social, political, and cultural foundations, and mental well-being. (See: "Bhattacharya S, Menon GS, Garg S,

Grover A, Saleem SM, Kushwaha P. The lingering menace of drug abuse among the Indian youth–it's time for action. Indian J Community Med 2025;50:S9-12, published on 17th April, 2025")

10. According to many news reports, India faces a clear dilemma between tackling the narcotics crisis systematically or sacrificing its most valuable resource, i.e. its young people. The extent of the menace of drug abuse has also been highlighted by this Court in the case of ***Ankush Vipan Kapoor v. National Investigation Agency, (2025) 5 SCC 155***, wherein this Court has observed as under:

> "9.1 The ills of drug abuse seem to be shadowing the length and breadth of our country, with the Central and every State Government fighting against the menace of substance abuse. The debilitating impact of the drug trade and drug abuse is an immediate and serious concern for India. As the globe grapples with the menace of escalating Substance Use Disorders ("SUD") and an ever accessible drug market, the consequences leave a generational Page 75 of 84 imprint on public health and even national security. Article 47 of the Constitution makes it a duty of the State to regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties, and in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about the prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health. The State has a responsibility to address the root causes of this predicament and develop effective intervention strategies to ensure that India's younger population, which is particularly vulnerable to substance abuse, is protected and saved from such a menace. This is particularly because substance abuse is linked to social problems

> and can contribute to child maltreatment, spousal violence, and even property crime in a family."

19. Hence, the petitioner cannot be released on bail simply because the rigours of Section 37 of the NDPS Act do not apply to his case.

20. The status report shows that F.I.R. no. 31 of 2024, dated 09.03.2024, under Section 379 at Police Station Rampur Bushehar, FIR no. 23 of 2025, dated 02.03.2025, under Sections 21 and 29 of NDPS Act at Police Station Parwanoo, District Solan, H.P. FIR no. 138 of 2025, dated 06.11.2025, under Sections 21 and 29 of NDPS Act at Police Station Dhalli, District Shimla, H.P. and FIR number 143 of 2025, dated 21.11.2025, under Sections 21 and 29 at Police Station Dhalli, District Shimla, have been registered against the petitioner, which means that the petitioner has criminal antecedents. This Court dealt with the relevance of criminal antecedents while granting bail in ***Champa vs. State of H.P.: 2025:HHC:28899*** and held that the criminal antecedents would disentitle an accused from the concession of bail. This judgment was unsuccessfully assailed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***SLP(Criminal) 19120 of 2025*** titled ***Champa Devi***

vs State of H.P., decided on ***27.11.2025.*** Therefore, the relevance of criminal antecedents cannot be ignored.

21. It was rightly submitted on behalf of the State that the petitioner's previous conduct shows that he would indulge in the commission of a similar crime in case of his release on bail. Therefore, he cannot be released on bail.

22. It was submitted that there is a delay in the progress of the trial and the petitioner is entitled to bail on this ground. This submission cannot be accepted. The status report mentions that statements of nine witnesses have been recorded and the statements of twelve witnesses are to be recorded. Recording the statements of nine witnesses within ten months does not show any delay. The petitioner has not filed the copies of the order sheets to demonstrate that the delay is attributable to the Court or the prosecution and not to him. Therefore, he cannot be held entitled to bail on this consideration.

23. No other point was urged.

24. In view of the above, the present petition fails and is dismissed.

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25. The observations made hereinabove are regarding the disposal of this petition and will have no bearing whatsoever on the merits of the case.

(Rakesh Kainthla)
Judge

25th November, 2026
(Ravinder)