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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M No.19943 of 2026

Aditya Sharma ... Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab ... Respondent

1.	The date when the judgment is reserved	21.04.2026
2.	The date when the judgment is pronounced	22.04.2026
3.	The date when the judgment is uploaded on the website	22.04.2026
4.	Whether only operative part of the judgment is pronounced or whether the full judgment is pronounced	Full
5.	The delay, if any, of the pronouncement of full judgment, and reasons thereof	Not applicable

CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANISHA BATRA

Present: Mr. Nandan Jindal, Advocate,
for the petitioner.

Mr. Roshandeep Singh, AAG, Punjab,
for the respondent-State.

MANISHA BATRA, J.

1. The instant one is the third petition as filed by the petitioner under Section 483 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (For short “BNSS”) seeking regular bail in case arising out of FIR No.34

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dated 15.02.2024 registered under Section 20 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (for short 'NDPS Act') at Police Station Kharar, District SAS Nagar. One of the petitions as filed by the petitioner previously, had been dismissed as withdrawn whereas one had been dismissed by passing a detailed order on 05.02.2025.

2. As per the allegations, on 15.02.2024, on the basis of a secret information, the petitioner was apprehended and was found in conscious possession of 01 Kg 100 grams of Charas, which was taken into custody. The petitioner was formally arrested. Presently, he is facing trial for commission of offence punishable under Section 20 of NDPS Act.

3. It is argued by learned counsel for the petitioner that he has been in custody since long. There are no chances of conclusion of trial in near future as only 01 out of 12 prosecution witnesses has been examined so far. Each day spent by him in custody has furnished a ground afresh to seek concession of bail. It is, therefore, argued that the petition deserves to be allowed.

4. Per contra, learned Assistant Advocate General, Punjab has argued that keeping in view the gravity of the allegations as levelled against the petitioner, he does not deserve to be extended benefit of bail and that the instant petition being successive is not maintainable. With these broad submissions, it is argued that the petition does not deserve to be allowed.

5. This Court has considered the rival submissions.

6. The petitioner is alleged to have been found in conscious

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possession of commercial quantity of contraband. The allegations make out a prima facie case against him. However, he has now remained in custody for a period of about 02 years, 02 months and 07 days. Only 01 out of 12 prosecution witnesses, has been examined so far. Meaning thereby that there are no chances of conclusion of the trial in near future. It is well settled proposition of law that grant of bail on account 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 Live Law (SC) 533***, 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

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override the statutory embargo contained under Section 37 of the NDPS Act.

7. Reliance can also be placed upon ***Santosh Pawar Vs. State of Chhattishgarh & Anr., Criminal Appeal No.4883/2025***, wherein Hon'ble Supreme Court observed that rigors 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 abovementioned case, the Hon'ble Supreme Court 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.

8. 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, 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.

9. 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 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.

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10. The similar benefit has been extended 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***.

11. So far as the maintainability of the petition is concerned, it may be mentioned that an accused has a right to make successive applications for grant of bail, and it is the duty of the Court, while entertaining such a subsequent bail application, to consider the reasons and grounds on which the earlier bail petition was rejected. The fresh grounds which persuade the Court to take a view different from the one taken in the earlier application are also required to be recorded. Reference in this regard can be made to ***Prasad Shrikant Purohit v. State of Maharashtra (2018) 11 SCC 458***, wherein it was so observed. The first petition of the petitioner was dismissed on 05.02.2025 and the second petition was dismissed as withdrawn on 20.11.2025. Trial has not progressed much thereafter. 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 about 02 years, 02 months and 07 days, the trial is not likely to be concluded in near future as only 01 out of 12 prosecution witnesses has been 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. As such, the prolonged detention of the petitioner

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amounts to drastic change in circumstances extending fresh ground to petitioner to seek bail.

12. In view of the above discussion, this Court is of the considered opinion that a case is made out for grant of bail to the petitioner. 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 learned trial Court/CJM/Duty Magistrate concerned, 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.

13. 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.

22.04.2026
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(MANISHA BATRA)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned
Whether reportable

Yes/No
Yes/No