



**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH**

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CRM-M-30125-2026 (O&M)

Decided on : 29.05.2026

Balwant Singh

..... Petitioner

VERSUS

State of Punjab

..... Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SURYA PARTAP SINGH

Present: Mr. Urvash Vashisht and Mr. Shlok Dalal, Advocates
for the petitioner.

Mr. I.P.S. Sabharwal, DAG, Punjab.

SURYA PARTAP SINGH, J. (Oral)

This petition is the first petition for bail, filed by the petitioner under Section 483 of 'the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita', 2023. It has been filed with regard to a case arising out of FIR No.26 dated 13.02.2024, for the commission of offence punishable under Section 15 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, hereinafter being referred to as 'NDPS Act', Police Station Samana, District Patiala.

2. The abovementioned FIR came into being at the instance of 'SI Jaswinder Singh', who had reported that on 13.02.2024, when he was leading a team of police officials, deputed for patrolling duty, he spotted a vehicle bearing registration No.PB11-BK-5771 make Bharat Benz. According to above-named police officer, he observed that white coloured plastic bags kept in the abovementioned truck were being unloaded. It was further reported by the above-named police officer that when the police



party on the basis of suspicion approached the abovementioned spot, the person who was unloading the bags, and another one who was standing beside the vehicle, tried to flee from the spot, but, both of them were apprehended by the police party. On enquiry, one person disclosed his name as 'Shamsher Singh' and the other one who was unloading the bags, as 'Balwant Singh' (the petitioner herein). It is the case of the prosecution that when the contents of the bags, being transported in the above-mentioned vehicle, were examined, it was found that the bags were full of poppy husk/straw and on measurement, it was found that total quantity of poppy husk/straw being transported in the abovementioned vehicle was found to be 60 kg.

3. It is the case of the prosecution that pursuant to recovery of abovementioned contraband, necessary formalities with regard to seizure & sealing of contraband, lodging of FIR, and formal arrest of the accused were performed, and further investigation taken up

4. **Notice of motion.**

5. Mr. I.P.S. Sabharwal, DAG, Punjab appears on behalf of respondent-State. Hence service of notice upon the State is hereby dispensed with. The learned State Counsel has filed custody certificate of the petitioner. The same be taken on record. No formal reply has been filed by the State. However, the learned State Counsel has orally opposed the present petition.

6. Heard.



7. The record has been perused carefully.
8. Since the recovery of contraband in the case in hand comes within the ambit of commercial quantity, the principles of law laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of 'Mohd. Muslim @ Hussain v. State' (NCT of Delhi), 2023 SCC OnLine SC 352 are relevant. In the abovementioned case, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has 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 which is applicable to offences under the Act.
9. In this regard it is also relevant to mention here that the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of '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 1109, extended the benefit of bail to the accused, who had been incarcerated for a period of almost 2-3 years and the trial was likely to take considerable time. The above-mentioned benefit has been given by observing that prolonged incarceration generally militates 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.
10. In addition to above, in a recently pronounced verdict in the case of 'Santosh Pawar Vs. State of Chhattishgarh & Anr.' Criminal Appeal No.4883/2025, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India 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 above-mentioned case the Hon'ble 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.

11. 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 Hon'ble Supreme Court of India expressed the opinion that Section 436A of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 [which requires inter alia the accused to be enlarged on bail if the trial is not concluded within specified periods] would apply in such cases.

12. In the case of 'Ismail Khan @ Pathan vs. State of Rajasthan' Criminal 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.

13. The similar benefit has been given 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.



14. In the case of ‘Hasanujjaman & Ors. V/s The State of West Bengal’ SLP (Crl.) No.3221 of 2023, the benefit of bail has been accorded by the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India to an accused, who was found in the possession of 115 bottles of phensedyl, by observing that:-

- a) the petitioner was in custody for a period of one year and three months;
- b) the investigation in that case was complete and charge-sheet had been filed, but charges were yet to be framed;
- c) the conclusion of trial would take some time; and
- d) the petitioner had no criminal antecedents.

In view of abovementioned prevailing factors, it has been observed by the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India that there is substantial compliance of Section-37 of NDPS Act.

15. Similarly, in the case of ‘Nandlal Mondal @Abhay Mondal V/s The State of West Bengal’ SLP(Crl) No.12788/2023, the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India afforded the benefit of bail to the accused, who was found in possession of 10,000 ml of codeine phosphate, and was in custody for a period of one and a half year, by considering that conclusion of trial would take long time.

16. If the facts and circumstances of the present case are analyzed in the light of above-mentioned principles of law, it transpires that:-

- i. that the petitioner is already in custody for a period of more than two years and three months;
- ii. that the benefit of bail has already been accorded to the similarly placed co-accused;



- iii. that the trial is not likely to be concluded in near future, as out of seventeen prosecution witnesses, only nine have been examined so far;
- iv. that due to delay in trial, the valuable right of speedy trial guaranteed to the petitioner is being violated and therefore, rigors of Section-37 of NDPS Act can be relaxed;
- v. that nothing has been left to be recovered from the possession of petitioner;
- vi. that there is nothing on record to show that if released on bail, the petitioner may tamper with the evidence or influence the witnesses; and
- vii. that there is nothing on record to show that if released on bail, the petitioner will not participate/cooperate in the trial.

17. In the present case, the principles of law laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of "Dataram versus State of Uttar Pradesh and another", 2018(2) R.C.R. (Criminal) 131, are relevant, wherein it has been observed that "a fundamental postulate of criminal jurisprudence is the presumption of innocence, meaning thereby that a person is believed to be innocent until found guilty. However, there are instances in our criminal law where a reverse onus has been placed on an accused with regard to some specific offences but that is another matter and does not detract from the fundamental postulate in respect of other offences. Yet another important facet of our criminal jurisprudence is that the grant of bail is the general rule and putting a person in jail or in a prison or in a correction home (whichever expression one may wish to use) is an exception. Unfortunately, some of these basic principles appear to have been



lost sight of with the result that more and more persons are being incarcerated and for longer periods. This does not do any good to our criminal jurisprudence or to our society. There is no doubt that the grant or denial of bail is entirely the discretion of the judge considering a case but even so, the exercise of judicial discretion has been circumscribed by a large number of decisions rendered by this Court and by every High Court in the country. Yet, occasionally there is a necessity to introspect whether denying bail to an accused person is the right thing to do on the facts and in the circumstances of a case”.

18. The principles laid down by the Hon’ble the Supreme Court of India in the case of ‘Satender Kumar Antil Vs. Central Bureau of Investigation and Another’, (2022) 10 SCC 51, are also relevant in this case. In the abovementioned case, it has been observed that “the rate of conviction in criminal cases in India is abysmally low. It appears to us that this factor weighs on the mind of the Court while deciding the bail applications in a negative sense. Courts tend to think that the possibility of a conviction being nearer to rarity, bail applications will have to be decided strictly, contrary to legal principles. We cannot mix up consideration of a bail application, which is not punitive in nature with that of a possible adjudication by way of trial. On the contrary, an ultimate acquittal with continued custody would be a case of grave injustice”.

19. Recently, in the case of ‘Tapas Kumar Palit Vs. State of Chhattisgarh’, 2025 SCC Online SC 322, the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India has observed that “if an accused is to get a final verdict after



incarceration of six to seven years in jail as an undertrial prisoner, then, definitely, it could be said that his right to have a speedy trial under Article 21 of the Constitution has been infringed”. It has also been observed by the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India in the abovementioned case that “delays are bad for the accused and extremely bad for the victims, for Indian society and for the credibility of our justice system, which is valued. Judges are the masters of their Courtrooms and the Criminal Procedure Code provides many tools for the Judges to use in order to ensure that cases proceed efficiently”.

20. To elucidate further, this Court is conscious of the basic and fundamental principle of law that right to speedy trial is a part of reasonable, fair and just procedure enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. This constitutional right cannot be denied to the accused as mandated by Hon’ble Apex court in “Balwinder Singh versus State of Punjab and Another”, 2024 SCC Online SC 4354.

21. If the cumulative effect of all the abovementioned factors, involved in the instant case, is taken into consideration, it leads to a conclusion that the petitioner is entitled to the benefit of bail, and that the present petition deserves to be allowed.

22. Accordingly, without commenting anything on the merits of the case, the present petition is hereby ***allowed***. The petitioner is hereby ordered to be released on bail on furnishing personal bond and surety bond(s) to the satisfaction of learned trial Court/Duty Magistrate concerned. However the abovementioned concession shall be subject to following conditions:-

- (i) that the petitioner shall not directly or indirectly make any inducement, threat or promise to any person acquainted with the facts of the case, so as to dissuade him to disclose such facts to the Court or to any other authority;
- (ii) that the petitioner shall at the time of execution of bond, furnish the address to the Court concerned and shall notify the change in address to the trial Court, till the final decision of the trial; and
- (iii) that the petitioner shall not leave India without prior permission of the trial Court.

(SURYA PARTAP SINGH)
JUDGE

29.05.2026
Gaurav Thakur

Whether speaking / reasoned	Yes/No
Whether Reportable	Yes/No