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**IN THE HIGH COURT FOR THE STATES OF PUNJAB AND
HARYANA AT CHANDIGARH**

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CRM-M-48156-2025 (O&M)
Date of decision: 17.03.2026

Pushwinder Singh @ Laddi**...Petitioner**

Versus

State of Punjab**...Respondent****CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANISHA BATRA**

Present:- Ms. Sarita, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. Roshandeep Singh, AAG, Punjab.

MANISHA BATRA, J. (Oral)

1. Prayer in this petition, filed under Section 483 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, is for grant of regular bail to the petitioner in FIR No. 179 dated 09.10.2023, registered under Sections 22 and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (*for short 'NDPS Act'*) at Police Station Garhshankar, District Hoshiarpur.

2. Brief facts of the case relevant for the disposal of the present petition are that on 09.10.2023, the petitioner was apprehended by a police party and recovery of 263 grams of intoxicant powder was effected from him. Since he could not produce any valid license or permit to keep in his possession the recovered drugs, he was formally arrested at the spot. He was granted concession of interim bail by the learned trial Court awaiting FSL report, vide order dated 30.11.2023. On receipt of FSL report, which confirmed that recovered powder was containing Tramadol Hydrochloride, the petitioner had surrendered back. Thereafter, the interim bail granted to the

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petitioner was cancelled by the learned trial Court, vide order dated, 08.04.2024 and he had surrendered back. Since then, he has been in custody.

3. It is argued by learned counsel for the petitioner that he has been falsely implicated in this case. A false recovery was planted upon him. Even otherwise, the quantity of the same was marginally above the commercial quantity. He has clean antecedents. He is in custody for a period of 01 year, 07 months and 13 days excluding the period of his interim bail. Investigation has since been completed and challan has been filed. Conclusion of trial is likely to take time as only one out of total thirteen prosecution witnesses has been examined so far. His prolonged detention entitles him to seek bail. No useful purpose would be served by keeping him in custody anymore. Therefore, it is urged that the petition deserves to be allowed and the petitioner deserves to be granted benefit of regular bail.

4. Custody certificate has been filed by the respondent-State. Learned State counsel has argued that keeping in view the gravity of the allegations levelled against the petitioner and the fact that commercial quantity of the contraband had been recovered from him, he is not entitled to get benefit of bail as rigors of Section 37 of the NDPS Act would be attracted against him. The petitioner may abscond or involve in committing similar offences again, if extended benefit of bail. Hence, it is urged that the petition is liable to be dismissed.

5. This Court has heard the rival submissions.

6. As per the allegations, the petitioner was found in conscious possession of commercial quantity of the contraband on 09.10.2023. Though, the allegations prima facie make out a case for commission of subject

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offences against the petitioner, however, on a perusal of the record, it is apparent that there are no chances of conclusion of the trial in near future and it will take considerable time as only one out of total thirteen prosecution witnesses has been examined so far. The petitioner has remained in custody for a considerable period of time. 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 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 of India and in such a situation, the constitutional principles must override the statutory embargo contained under Section 37 of the NDPS Act.

7. Reliance can also be placed upon ***Santosh Pawar Vs. State of***

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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 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 Criminal 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.

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***.

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11. On analysing 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 01 year, 07 months and 13 days and the trial is not likely to be concluded in near future as observed above. The petitioner has clean antecedents. In view thereof, this Court is of the considered opinion that 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 or indulge in similar offences. 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 Aadhar card, and shall not change his mobile number(s) during the pendency of the trial.

12. It is made clear that any observation made herein above is only for the purpose of deciding the present petition and the same shall have no bearing on the merits of the case.

17.03.2026

Waseem Ansari

(MANISHA BATRA)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned
Whether reportable

Yes/No
Yes/No