

2026.PHHC.041032



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-55488-2025

Kamaljit Singh @ Kamaljit Ram

...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

Sr. No.	Particulars	Details
1	The date when the judgment is reserved	12.03.2026
2	The date when the judgment is pronounced	17.03.2026
3	The date when the judgment is uploaded on the website	17.03.2026
4	Whether only operative part of the judgment is pronounced or 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. Damanjit Singh Sandhu, Advocate for the petitioner.

Ms. Sakshi Bakshi, Assistant Advocate General, Punjab.

MANISHA BATRA, J :-

The instant one is the second petition filed under Section 483 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (for short ‘BNSS’) by the petitioner seeking grant of regular bail in case bearing FIR No. 215 dated 16.08.2021 registered under Section 15 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act, 1985 (for short ‘NDPS Act’) (Section 29 of NDPS Act added later on) at Police Station Focal Point, District Ludhiana, Punjab. The previous petition filed by the petitioner had been dismissed for want of prosecution vide order dated 10.09.2025.

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2. As per the allegations, on 16.08.2021, while performing patrolling duty in the area of village Jandiali, the police party noticed one car make Ascent bearing registration No. PB-02-AG-3355 lying parked on the left side of the *Kutcha* path of the road. On seeing the police officials, one person stepped out of the car and rushed towards the fields. He was apprehended. On asking, he disclosed his name as Raj Kumar. On conducting search, 66 kgs of poppy husk was found kept in the car. Accused Raj Kumar on interrogation disclosed that the contraband belong to the petitioner, his uncle Balbir Singh and one Sukhi @ Matta and also that all the above named persons including the petitioner were going in an Alto car bearing registration No. PB-08-CL-321 for supplying the poppy husk at village Pangaliyan and that they had dumped huge quantity of poppy husk in bushes near the above said village. The police party left for village Pangaliyan along with the accused Raj Kumar. On seeing the police officials, two females and two male persons who were present at the spot fled towards the fields and succeeded in escaping from the spot on two vehicles. On conducting search, 16 bags containing 352 kgs of poppy husk were found kept in an Alto car which was lying parked there. The recovered contraband was taken into possession. The petitioner was arrested on 16.11.2021. The co-accused were also arrested subsequently. Investigation now stands completed.

3. It is argued by learned counsel for the petitioner that he has been falsely implicated in this case. He is in custody for a period of more than 04 years and 03 months. There are no chances of conclusion of trial in near future as till date, none out of 17 prosecution witnesses has been examined. The

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continued detention of the petitioner will not serve any useful purpose. Co-accused Balbir Singh and Sukhi @ Matta have been extended benefit of bail. On parity, he too deserves to be extended the same benefit. It is, therefore, argued that he deserves to be released on bail.

4. *Per contra*, learned State counsel has argued that, keeping in view the criminal antecedents of the petitioner and the nature of the allegations levelled against him, coupled with the fact that the rigors of Section 37 of the NDPS Act are attracted in the present case, the petitioner does not deserve to be extended the benefit of bail. It is also argued that there are chances of his absconding or committing similar offences, if extended benefit of bail. Therefore, it is stressed that the petition does not deserve to be allowed.

5. This Court has heard learned counsel for the parties at considerable length.

6. The petitioner along with the co-accused is alleged to have been found in conscious possession of commercial quantity of contraband. He has been in custody for over a period for 04 years and 03 months. This factor, in the opinion of this Court, is a ground to move for bail afresh. The Hon'ble Apex Court has observed in a catena of cases that an accused cannot be kept in custody for an indefinite period of time, and the bail application can be considered on its own merits even if it is filed repeatedly. It has also been held that every day spent in custody can provide a new cause of action for filing a bail application under certain circumstances. This principle is a part of the broader approach emphasizing that law prefers bail over jail, aiming to balance the rights of the accused with the requirements of the criminal justice

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system. Prolonged detention itself is a ground for reconsideration of bail since the settled principle of law is that detention prior to trial should not become punitive. Trial is likely to take time to conclude as most of the prosecution witnesses are yet to be examined. 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 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 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.

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 of India, 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 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.

10. The similar benefit has been extended by Hon'ble Supreme Court 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***

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***Chandigarh Criminal Appeal No.4872 of 2025.***

11. 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 over a period of four years and three months, the trial is not likely to be concluded in near future as all the prosecution witnesses are yet to be 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.

12. In view of the above discussion, this Court is of the opinion that a case is made out for grant of bail to the petitioner at this stage. 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 is 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.

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.

14. Since the main petition has already been decided, pending

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application, if any, is rendered infructuous.

[MANISHA BATRA]
JUDGE

17th March, 2026

Parveen Sharma

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|-------------------------------|---|----------|
| 1. Whether speaking/ reasoned | : | Yes / No |
| 2. Whether reportable | : | Yes / No |