

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

2026:PHHC:035928



CRM-M-67376-2025 (O&M)

Jagtar Singh @ Malli

... Petitioner

Vs.

State of Punjab

... Respondent

1.	The date when the judgment is reserved	06.03.2026
2.	The date when the judgment is pronounced	10.03.2026
3.	The date when the judgment is uploaded on the website	10.03.2026
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. Ankit Tayal, Advocate for the petitioner.

Ms. Ruchika Sabherwal, Sr. DAG, Punjab.

...

Manisha Batra, J. (Oral).

1. The instant one is the third petition as filed by the petitioner seeking benefit of regular bail in case arising out of FIR No.167, dated 03.08.2023, registered under Section 22 of the NDPS Act (offence under Section 29 of the NDPS Act was added lateron), at Police Station

Dharamkot, District Moga.

2. As per the allegations, on 03.08.2023, 65 loose tablets containing salt of Etizolam weighing 8.385 mg. were recovered from the conscious possession of the petitioner, who was apprehended, when he had thrown a transparent polythene kept in the pocket of his pant from where the contraband had been recovered. Investigation now stands completed. The first petition as filed by the petitioner has been dismissed as withdrawn vide order dated 29.05.2024 whereas the second petition was dismissed on 11.03.2025.

3. It is argued by learned counsel for the petitioner that after dismissal of his previous petitions, the trial has not progressed much as only 05 out of 14 prosecution witnesses have been examined so far and that too partially. He has been in custody since long. Each day spent by him in custody furnishes a new ground for seeking bail afresh. No useful purpose would be served by his further detention. It is, thus, argued that he deserves to be extended the benefit of bail.

4. Per contra, learned State counsel has argued that the second petition as filed by the petitioner had been dismissed by passing a detailed order. There is no substantive or drastic change in the circumstances. The allegations against him are serious in nature. It is, therefore, argued that the petition is not maintainable and deserves to be dismissed.

5. This Court has heard the rival submissions made by learned counsel for the parties.

6. So far as the question of 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 by Hon'ble Supreme Court. The petitioner is in continuous custody since 03.08.2023. Only 05 out of 14 prosecution witnesses have 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 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***, which is a recently pronounced verdict of Hon'ble Supreme Court observing 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 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***.

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 a period of about 02 years and 07 months, the trial is not likely to be concluded in near future; 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 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 extent of two sureties in the like amount each, to the satisfaction of the learned trial Court, and subject to the condition that 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.

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 been allowed, pending application,

if any, is rendered infructuous.

10.03.2026
harjeet

(MANISHA BATRA)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned :	Yes/No
Whether reportable :	Yes/No