



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

207

CRM-M No.29000 of 2026 (O&M)

Date of Decision: 03.06.2026

Sukhjit Singh Johal @ Sukh Johal**.....Petitioner****Versus****State of Punjab****..... Respondent****CORAM: HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE SURYA PARTAP SINGH**

Present: Mr. Tanvir Joshi, Advocate for the petitioner.
(through hybrid mode).

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

SURYA PARTAP SINGH, J. (Oral):

This is first petition for bail, filed by the petitioner under Section 483 of the 'Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023'. This petition pertains to a case arising out of FIR No. 94 dated 25.04.2025 for the commission of offence punishable under Section(s) 127(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and Section(s) 22(B)(C) & 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, hereinafter being referred to as "NDPS Act" only, Police Station Sadar, District Jalandhar, Punjab.

2. The FIR of this case came into being on the report of 'ASI Balwinder Kumar' who had reported that on 24.04.2025 he had received a telephonic message from Inspector/SHO Police Station Sadar, that an illegal drug de-addiction centre had been set-up near Bus Stand village Samrai, and that a team of Medical Officer, SDM Phillaur, Tehsildar Nurmahal (Duty



Magistrate) and DSP Cantt. Jalandhar was going to inspect the abovesaid premises. According to above named police officer when he reached the spot along with the above-mentioned team members, the team of Drug Inspector recovered 1005 tablets of RLAM 0.5 MG. (Alprazolam Tablets IP) and 1000 tablets of Panadol (Tramadol Hydrochloride Tablets USP 100 MG) from the premises and seized the same.

3. It is case of the prosecution that pursuant to recovery of above mentioned contraband requisite formalities with regard to seizure and sealing of contraband, formal arrest of the accused and registration of FIR were completed and further investigation taken up.

4. **Notice of motion.**

5. Since advance notice has already been served, Mr. I.P.S. Sabharwal, DAG, Punjab, has appeared 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. It has been contended by learned counsel for the petitioner that three similarly placed co-accused have already been accorded the benefit of bail in the present case. It has also been contended by learned counsel for the petitioner that the petitioner has already suffered incarceration for a period of more than one year and one month, and that nothing has been left to be recovered from the possession of petitioner, and that the detention of petitioner



is not likely to serve any purpose. It has also been contended by learned counsel for the petitioner that the trial is not likely to be concluded in near future, and thus, the petitioner is entitled to the benefit of bail.

8. The learned State counsel has controverted the above-mentioned arguments. According to learned State counsel there are very specific and categorical allegations against the petitioner with regard to his involvement in the commission of offence.

9. The record has been perused carefully.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.



18. A perusal of the record shows that following are the relevant factors which are required to be taken into consideration for a decision in the present petition:-

- i) that the petitioner is already in custody for a period of more than one year and one month;
- ii) that the similarly placed co-accused have already been accorded the benefit of bail;
- iii) that nothing has been left to be recovered from the possession of petitioner;
- iv) that the investigation and trial of this case are not likely to be concluded in near future;
- v) that due to delay in trial the fundamental right of speedy trial, guaranteed to the petitioner, is being violated, and therefore rigors of Section-37 of NDPS Act deserves to be relaxed;
- vi) that the detention of petitioner in the judicial lock-up is not likely to serve any purpose;
- vii) that there is nothing on record to show that if released on bail, the petitioner may tamper with the evidence or influence the witnesses;
- viii) that there is nothing on record to show that if released on bail, the petitioner will not co-operate/participate in the trial.

19. 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) 3 SCC 22, 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”.

20. The principles laid down by the Hon’ble the Supreme Court of India in the case of ‘Satender Kumar Antil v. Central Bureau of Investigation’ (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”.

21. 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”.

22. 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 an undertrial prisoner, as mandated by Hon’ble Apex court in ‘Balwinder Singh versus State of Punjab and another’ 2024 SCC Online SC 4354.

23. Taking into consideration the cumulative effect of all the aforesaid factors, it is hereby held that the petitioner is entitled to the concession of bail, and that the present petition deserves to be allowed.

24. 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. However, the abovesaid benefit 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 from disclosing 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 trial Court.

25. It is, however, made clear that any observation made hereinabove is only for the purpose of deciding the present petition and the same shall have no bearing on the merits of the case.

(SURYA PARTAP SINGH)
JUDGE

03.06.2026

Manoj Bhutani

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