CALCUTTA HIGH COURT In the Circuit Bench at Jalpaiguri Appellate Side

CRM (NDPS) 260 of 2023

In Re: An application for bail under Section 439 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 filed on 22.03.2023 in connection with Rajganj Police Station Case no. 374/2022 dated 25.06.2022 under Section 21(c)/29 of NDPS Act 1985; corresponding to NDPS Case No. 85/2022.

And

In the matter of: Jafar Ali

... Petitioner.

Mr. Jaydeep Kanta Bhowmik

... for the Petitioner.

Mr. Niloy Chakraborty

Mr. Sourav Ganguly

... for the State.

The present application for bail is moved on the ground of non compliance of Section 41B of the Cr.P.C.

The following orders of Co-ordinate Bench of this Court granting Bail on such ground of non compliance of Section 41B Cr.P.C. by the arresting officer have been relied upon:-

- (i) Order dated 13.01.2023 in CRM (NDPS) 447 of 2022.
- (ii) Order dated 31.01.2023 in CRM (NDPS) 452 of 2022.
- (iii) Order dated 31.01.2023 in CRM (NDPS) 448 of 2022.

It is submitted by the learned prosecutor that in a case of such nature (NDPS), the persons apprehended are very reluctant to disclose, the name and address of the family members, near relatives or friends as they do not want them to get involved in such cases and more so that such offences are not within the knowledge of their family members, near relatives and friends, and this makes it very difficult to fill the columns as required under Section 41B Cr.P.C.

It is seen that taking advantage of such laches on the part of the arresting officer/investigating officer, the accuseds in such heinous crimes towards society (NDPS) are being released on Bail.

Cases of such nature (herein NDPS) not only destroy a person life, his family but also future generation. Such offences have far reaching effect in the society and should be dealt with all seriousness.

The following orders granting bail in similar cases have also been relied upon by the petitioner:-

- (i) Order dated 04.11.2022 in CRM (NDPS) 293 of 2022.
- (ii) Order dated 07.11.2022 in CRM (NDPS) 311 of 2022.
- (iii) Order dated 07.11.2022 in CRM (NDPS) 280 of 2022.
- (iv) Order dated 10.02.2023 in CRM (NDPS) 128 of 2023.
- (v) Order dated 10.11.2022 in CRM (NDPS) 358 of 2022.

Ld. APP stresses upon Section 37 of the NDPS Act stating that the Act is a special statute and the provisions under the Act are very stringent and specific to the offences under the Act. He relies upon the following decisions:-

(i) Union of India vs Ram Samujh and Anr., (1999) 9

SCC 429, on August 30, 1999. Wherein the Court

held:-

"The legislative mandate contained in the statement of Objects and Reasons for introducing Bill No. 125 of 1988 which culminated in the incorporation of the amended Section 37 has to be adhered to and followed. In a murder case, the accused commits murder of one or two persons, while those persons who are dealing in narcotic drugs are instruments in causing death or in inflicting death blow to a number of innocent young victims, who are vulnerable; it causes deleterious effects and a deadly impact on the society, they are a hazard to the society; even if they are released temporarily, in all probability, they would continue their nefarious activities of trafficking and/or dealing in intoxicants clandestinely. To check the menace of dangerous drugs flooding the market, Parliament has provided that the person accused of offences under the NDPS Act should not be released on bail during trial unless the mandatory conditions provided in Section 37(1) (b) are satisfied. The High Court has not given any justifiable reason for not abiding by the aforesaid mandate the release ordering respondent-accused on bail. Hence, High Court's order has to be set aside.'

(ii) Union of India vs Ajay Kumar Singh alias Pappu, 2023 SCC OnLine SC 346, on March 28, 2023.

Wherein it was held:-

«

^{4.} The respondent-accused is alleged to be involved in Case No. 687/2021 arising out of Case No. 1/2021 under Sections 8/20/27-A/29/32 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act,

1985 (in short 'the NDPS Act'), Police Station-D.R.I., Varanasi.

- 5. The respondent-accused has been directed to be released on bail by the impugned order keeping in mind the larger mandate of Article 21 of the Constitution of India in the light of the decision of this Court passed on 11.07.2022 in Satender Kumar Antil v. Central Bureau of Investigation in SLP(Crl.) No. 5191 of 2021 reported in 2022 SCC OnLine SC 825, mainly for the reason that the main accused persons Om Prakash Yadav and Amit Yadav have already been enlarged on bail.
- **6.** Since the respondent-accused was in custody and had been directed to be released on bail, this Court on 13.02.2023 while issuing notice on the Special Leave Petition passed an interim order directing the suspension of the impugned order passed by the High Court......"

On considering the facts and circumstances of the case and materials on record, we rely upon the judgment of the Supreme Court in *Karnail Singh vs State of Haryana*, *Criminal Appeal No. 36 of 2003, on 29 July, 2009*, wherein the Court held:-

"3) Let us consider the Scheme of the NDPS Act and its relevant provisions. The 1985 Act came into force 14.11.1985. Certain provisions subsequently amended in 1989 and in 2001. Chapter IV deals with offences and penalties whereas Chapter V deals with procedure. Section issue warrant 41 relates to power to 42 with authorization. Section which concerned relates to power of entry, search, seizure and arrest without warrant or authorization. Section 43 relates to power of seizure and arrest in public place. Section 50 refers to conditions under which search of persons shall be conducted. The NDPS Act prescribes stringent punishment. balance must be struck between the need of the law and the enforcement of such law on the one hand and the protection of citizens from oppression and injustice on the other. This would mean that a balance must be struck in. The provisions contained in Chapter V, intended for providing certain checks on exercise of powers of the authority concerned, are capable of being misused through arbitrary or indiscriminate exercise unless strict compliance is required. The statute mandates that the prosecution must prove compliance with the said provisions.

4) The facts in Abdul Rashid Ibrahim Mansuri (supra) were as follows:

PW 2, Inspector of Police at Dariapur Police Station, got information on 12-1-1988 that one Iqbal Syed Husen was trying to transport charas up to Shahpur in an autorickshaw. At about 4.00 p.m. they sighted the autorickshaw which was then driven by the appellant. They stopped and checked it and found four gunny bags placed inside the vehicle. The police took the vehicle to the police station and when the gunny bags were opened ten packets of charas were found concealed therein. The value of the said contraband was estimated to be Rs. 5.29 lakhs.

When appellant/accused was questioned by the trial court under Section 313 of the Code of Criminal Procedure he did not dispute the fact that he rode the autorickshaw and that the same was intercepted by the police party and the gunny bags kept in the vehicle were taken out and examined by them at the police station. His defence was that those four brought in a truck at Chokha gunny bags were Bazar by two persons who unloaded them into his vehicle and directed him to transport the same to the destination mentioned by them. He carried out the assignment without knowing what were contents of the load in the gunny bags. The Trial Court acquitted the accused. But, State of Gujarat preferred an appeal before the High Court. The Division Bench of the High Court set aside the order of acquittal and convicted the accused of the offences charged. The convicted accused filed SLP before this Court and contended that there was noncompliance of Section 42 of the Act which was enough to vitiate the search as a whole. After referring Section 42 of the Act and the evidence of police officer as PW 2, the Court held that (1) he should have taken down the information in writing; and (2) he should have sent forthwith a copy thereof to his immediate official superior. After finding that PW 2 - police officer admitted that he proceeded to

the spot only on getting the information that somebody was trying to transport a narcotic substance and noting that PW 2 admitted that he proceeded on getting prior information from a Constable and the information was precisely one falling within the purview of Section 42(1) of the Act, the Court decided that PW 2 cannot wriggle out of the conditions stipulated in the said sub-section and unhesitatingly found that there was non-compliance of Section 42 of the Act. The State contended before the Bench that such non-compliance with Section 42 of the Act cannot be visited with greater consequences than what has been held by the Constitution Bench regarding non-compliance with the conditions prescribed in Section 50 of the Act. After referring to the dictum laid down in State of Punjab vs. Baldev Singh, (1999) 6 SCC 172, this Court held that the views expressed with reference to Section 50 of the Act would apply with reference to Section 42 also and consequently held as follows:

"If the officer has reason to believe from personal knowledge or prior information received from any person that any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance (in respect of which an offence has been committed) is kept or concealed in any building, conveyance or enclosed place, it is imperative that the officer should take it down in writing and he shall forthwith send a copy thereof to his immediate official superior. The action of the officer, who claims to have exercised it on the strength of such unrecorded information, would become suspect, though the trial may not vitiate on that score alone. Nonetheless the resultant position would be one of causing prejudice to the accused"

It was also contended by the learned counsel for the State of Gujarat that as the accused did not dispute the factum of recovery of the "charas" from the vehicle it does not matter that the information was not recorded at the first instance by the police officer. The Court did not approve such contention because it held that non-recording of information has in fact deprived the accused as well as the Court of the material to ascertain what was the precise information which PW 2 got before proceeding to stop the vehicle. It further held that value of such an information, which was the earliest in point of time, for ascertaining the extent of the involvement of the accused in the offence, was of a high degree. It further held that it is not enough that PW 2 was able to recollect from memory, when he was examined in court after the lapse of a long time, as to what information he got before he proceeded to the scene. Even otherwise, it held that the information which PW 2 recollected itself tends to exculpate the appellant rather than inculpate him. Finally the court held that non-recording of the vital information collected by the police at the first instance can be counted as a circumstance in favour of the accused. On analyzing this as well as the other materials, this court ultimately allowed the appeal filed by the accused/appellant and set aside the conviction and sentence passed on him by the High Court and restored the order of acquittal passed in his favour by the trial court. The ratio in Abdul Rashid (supra) is that the non-recording of vital information collected by the police at the first instance can be counted as a circumstance in favour of the accusedappellant. The police officer examined as a crucial witness, PW2, in that case admitted that he proceeded to the spot only on getting information that somebody was trying to transport a narcotic substance, but failed to take down the information in writing. Nor did he apprise his superior officer of any such information either then or later, much less send a copy of the information to the superior officer. Thus, it was a case of absolute non-compliance with the requirements of Section 42(1) and (2).

5)

It is clear from Sajan Abraham (supra) that to enforce the law under the NDPS Act stringently against the persons involved in illicit drug trafficking and drug abuse, the legislature has made some of its provisions obligatory for the prosecution to comply with, which the courts have interpreted to be mandatory. It is further clear that this is in order to balance the stringency for an accused by casting an obligation on the prosecution for its strict compliance. The court however while construing such provisions strictly should not interpret them literally so as to render their compliance impossible. It concluded that if in a case, the strict following of a mandate results in delay in trapping an accused, which may lead the accused to escape, then the prosecution case should not be thrown out. It is also clear that when substantial compliance has been made it would not vitiate the prosecution case.

- **6)** In the light of the above decisions and the principles enunciated therein, it would be appropriate to refer to Section 42 of the NDPS Act which is relevant for the present purpose as it stood before its amendment by Act 9 of 2001. It reads as under:-
- "42. Power of entry, search, seizure and arrest without warrant or authorisation.—
- (1) Any such officer (being an officer superior in rank to a peon, sepoy or constable) of the departments of central excise. narcotics, customs, intelligence or any other department of the Central Government or of the Border Security Force as is empowered in this behalf by general or special order by the Central Government, or any such officer (being an officer superior in rank to a peon, sepoy or constable) of the revenue, drugs control, excise, police or any other department of a State Government as is empowered in this behalf by general or special order of the State Government, if he has reason to believe from personal knowledge or information given by any person and taken down in writing that any narcotic drug, or psychotropic substance, in respect of which an offence punishable under Chapter IV has been committed or any document or other article which may furnish evidence of the commission of such offence is kept or concealed in any building, conveyance or enclosed place, may, between sunrise and sunset,--
- (a) enter into and search any such building, conveyance or place;
- (b) in case of resistance, break open any door and remove any obstacle to such entry;
- (c) seize such drug or substance and all materials used in the manufacture thereof and any other article and any animal or conveyance which he has reason to believe to be liable to confiscation under this Act and any document or other article which he has reason to believe may furnish evidence of the commission of any offence punishable under Chapter IV relating to such drug or substance; and
- (d) detain and search, and, if he thinks proper, arrest any person whom he has reason to believe to have committed any offence punishable under Chapter IV relating to such drug or substance: Provided that if such officer has reason to believe that a search warrant or authorisation cannot be obtained without affording opportunity for the concealment of evidence or facility for the escape of an offender, he may enter and search such building,

conveyance or enclosed place at any time between sunset and sunrise after recording the grounds of his belief.

(2) Where an officer takes down any information in writing under sub-section (1) or records grounds for his belief under the proviso thereto, he shall forthwith send a copy thereof to his immediate official superior."

Sub-section (2) as replaced by Act 9 of 2001 is extracted below:

- "(2) Where an officer takes down any information in writing under sub-Section (1) or records grounds for his belief under the proviso thereto, he shall within seventy two hours send a copy thereof to his immediate official superior."
- 7) It is well established that search and seizure are essential steps in the armoury of an investigator in the investigation of a criminal case. The Code of various Criminal Procedure provisions, in particularly, Sections 96 to 103 and Section 165 recognizes the necessity and usefulness of search and seizure during the investigation. Subsection(1) of Section 41 of the Act provides that a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Magistrate of the First Class or any Magistrate of Second Class specially empowered by the State Government may issue a warrant for the arrest of any person whom he has reason to believe to have committed any offence punishable under Chapter IV. Sub-Section (2) of Section 41 refers to issue of authorization for similar purposes by officers of departments of Central Excise, Narcotics, Customs, Intelligence, etc.
- 8) Sub-section (1) of Section 42 lays down that the empowered officer, if has a prior information given by any person, should necessarily take it down in writing and where he has reason to believe from his personal knowledge that offences under Chapter IV have been committed or that materials which may furnish evidence of commission of such offences are concealed in any building etc. he may carry out the arrest or search, without warrant between sunrise and sunset and he may do so without recording his reasons of belief. The proviso to sub-section (1) of Section 42 lays down that if the empowered officer has

reason to believe that a search warrant or authorization cannot be obtained without affording opportunity for the concealment of evidence or facility for the escape of an offender, he may enter and search such building, conveyance or enclosed place, at any time between sunset and sunrise, after recording the grounds of his belief.

- 9) Sub-section (2) of Section 42 as it originally stood mandated that the empowered officer who have taken down information in writing or records the grounds of his belief under the proviso to subsection (1), should send a copy of the same to his immediate official superior forthwith. But after the amendment in the year 2001, the period within which such report has to be sent was specified to be 72 hours. Section 43 deals with the power of seizure and arrest of the suspect in a public place.
- **10)** We may note that Abdul Rashid followed State of Punjab vs. Balbir Singh 1994 (3) SCC 299. We extract below the passage that was followed:
- (2-C) Under Section 42(1), the empowered officer if has a prior information given by any person, that should necessarily be taken down in writing. But if he has reason to believe from personal knowledge that offences under Chapter IV have been committed or materials which may furnish evidence of commission of such offences are concealed in any building etc., he may carry out the arrest or search without a warrant between sunrise and sunset and this provision does not mandate that he should record his reasons of belief. But under the proviso to Section 42(1), if such officer has to carry out such search between sunset and sunrise, he must record the grounds of his belief.

To this extent these provisions are mandatory and contravention of the same would affect the prosecution case and vitiate the trial.

(3) Under Section 42(1), such empowered officer who takes down any information in writing or records the grounds under proviso to Section 42(1) should forthwith send a copy thereof to his immediate official superior. If there is total non-compliance of this provision the same affects the prosecution case. To that extent it is mandatory. But if there is delay whether it was undue or whether the same has been explained or not, will be a question of fact in each case."

Abdul Rashid was followed in Koluttumottil Razak vs. State of Kerala - 2004 (4) SCC 465, which was also a case of total non-compliance with section 42, as the Sub-Inspector of Police neither reduced the information received into writing nor informed the official superior about it.

11) A careful examination of the facts in Abdul Rashid and Sajan Abraham shows that the decisions revolved on the facts and do not really lay down different prepositions of law. In Abdul Rashid, there was total non-compliance with the provision of section 42. The police officer neither took down the information as required under section 42(1) nor informed his immediate official superior, as required by Section 42(2). It is in that context this Court expressed the view that it was imperative that the police officer should take down the information and forthwith send a copy thereof to his immediate superior officer and the action of the police officer on the basis of the unrecorded information would become suspect though the trial may not be vitiated on that score alone. On the other hand, in Sajan Abraham, the facts were different. In that case, it was very difficult, if not impossible for the Sub-Inspector of police to record in writing the information given by PW-3 and send a copy thereof forthwith to his official superior, as the information was given to him when he was on patrol duty while he was moving in a jeep and unless he acted on the information immediately, the accused would have escaped. The Sub-Inspector of Police therefore acted, without recording the information into writing, but however, sent a copy of the FIR along with other records regarding arrest of the accused immediately to his superior officer. It is in these circumstances that this Court held that the omission to record in writing the information received was not a violation of Section 42.

12) The material difference between the provisions of Sections 42 and 43 is that Section 42 requires recording of reasons for belief and for taking down of information received in writing with regard to the commission of an offence before conducting search and seizure, Section 43 does not contain any such provision and as such while acting under Section 43 of the Act, the empowered officer has the power of seizure of the article etc. and arrest of a person who is found to be in possession of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance in a public place

where such possession appears to him to be unlawful.

- **13)** Section 50 prescribes the conditions under which search of a person shall be conducted. Subsection (1) provides that when the empowered officer is about to search any suspected person, he shall, if the person to be searched so requires, take him to the nearest gazetted officer or the Magistrate for the purpose. Under sub-section (2) it is laid down that if such request is made by the suspected person, the officer who is to take the search, may detain the suspect until he can be brought before such gazetted officer or the Magistrate. Sub-section (3) lays down that when the person to be searched is brought before such a gazetted officer or the Magistrate and such gazetted officer or the Magistrate finds that there are no reasonable grounds for search, he shall forthwith discharge the person to be searched, otherwise, he shall direct that the search be made.
- **14)** The Constitution Bench in Baldev Singh (supra) considered the compliance of Section 50 of the Act. While doing so, the Bench also considered the provisions of Sections 41 and 42 of the Act. It observed as follows:
- "8. Section 41 of the NDPS Act provides that a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Magistrate of the First Class or any Magistrate of the Second Class specially empowered by the State Government in this behalf, may issue a warrant for the arrest of and for search of any person whom he has reason to believe to have committed any offence punishable under Chapter IV. Vide sub-section (2) the power has also been vested in gazetted officers of the Departments of Central Excise, Narcotics, Customs, Revenue Intelligence or any other department of the Central Government or of the Border Security Force, empowered in that behalf by a general or special order of the State Government to arrest any person, who he has reason to believe to have committed an offence punishable under Chapter IV or to search any person or conveyance or vessel or building etc. with a view to seize any contraband or document or other article which may furnish evidence of the commission of such an offence, concealed in such building or conveyance or vessel or place.
- 9. Sub-section (1) of Section 42 lays down that the empowered officer, if has a prior information given by any person, he should necessarily take it down in writing and where he has reason to believe from

his personal knowledge that offences under Chapter IV have been committed or that materials which may furnish evidence of commission of such offences are concealed in any building etc. he may carry out the arrest or search, without a warrant between sunrise and sunset, and he may do so without recording his reasons of belief.

10. The proviso to sub-section (1) lays down that if the empowered officer has reason to believe that a search warrant or authorisation cannot be obtained without affording opportunity for the concealment of evidence or facility for the escape of an offender, he may enter and search such building, conveyance or enclosed place, at any time between sunset and sunrise, after recording the grounds of his belief. Vide sub- section (2) of Section 42, the empowered officer who takes down information in writing or records the grounds of his belief under the proviso to sub-section (1), shall forthwith send a copy of the same to his immediate official superior. Section 43 deals with the power of seizure and arrest of the suspect in a public place. The material difference between the provisions of Section 43 and Section 42 is that whereas Section 42 requires recording of reasons for belief and for taking down of information received in writing with regard to the commission of offence before conducting search seizure, Section 43 does not contain any such provision and as such while acting under Section 43 of the Act, the empowered officer has the power of seizure of the article etc. and arrest of a person who is found to be in possession of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance in a public place where such possession appears to him to be unlawful."

It is to be noted that Baldev Singh's case (supra) has dealt with Section 50 of the Act and the effect of noncompliance of the same. It was held that the same provisions of Section 50 containing certain protection and safeguards implicitly make it imperative and obligatory and cast a duty on the investigating officer to ensure that search and seizure of the person concerned is conducted in a manner prescribed by Section 50. The unamended Section 50 as existed during that period is as follows:

"Section 50 - Conditions under which search of persons shall be conducted (1) When any officer duly authorized under section 42 is about to search any person under the provisions of section 41, section

42 or section 43, he shall, if such person so requires, take such person without unnecessary delay to the nearest Gazetted Officer of any of the departments mentioned in section 42 or to the nearest Magistrate.

- (2) If such requisition is made, the officer may detain the person until he can bring him before the Gazetted Officer or the Magistrate referred to in subsection (1).
- (3) The Gazetted Officer or the Magistrate before whom any such person is brought shall, if he sees no reasonable ground for search, forthwith discharge the person but otherwise shall direct that search be made.
- (4) No female shall be searched by anyone excepting a female."

The safeguard or protection to be searched in the presence of a gazetted officer or a Magistrate has been incorporated in Section 50 to ensure that persons are only searched with a good cause and also with a view to maintain the veracity of evidence derived from such search. But this strict procedural requirement has been diluted by the insertion of subsection (5) and (6) to the Section by Act 9 of 2001, by which the following subsections were inserted accordingly:

- "(5) When an officer duly authorized under section 42 has reason to believe that it is not possible to take the person to be searched to the nearest Gazetted Officer or Magistrate without the possibility of the person to be searched parting with possession of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance, or controlled substance or article or document, he may, instead of taking such person to the nearest Gazetted Officer or Magistrate, proceed to search the person as provided under section 100 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974).
- (6) After a search is conducted under sub-section (5), the officer shall record the reasons for such belief which necessitated such search and within seventy-two hours send a copy thereof to his immediate official superior."

Through this amendment the strict procedural requirement as mandated by Baldev Singh's case was avoided as relaxation and fixing of the reasonable time to send the record to superior official as well as exercise of Section 100 of CrPC was included by the legislature. The effect conferred

upon the previously mandated strict compliance of Section 50 by Baldev Singh's case was that the procedural requirements which may have handicapped an emergency requirement of search and seizure and give the suspect a chance to escape were made directory based on the reasonableness of such emergency situation. Though it cannot be said that the protection or safeguard given to the suspects have been taken away completely but certain flexibility in the procedural norms were adopted only to balance an urgent situation. As a consequence the mandate given in Baldev Singh's case is diluted.

17)

(c) In other words, the compliance with the requirements of Sections 42 (1) and 42(2) in regard to writing down the information received and sending a copy thereof to the superior officer, should normally precede the entry, search and seizure by the officer. But in special circumstances involving emergent situations, the recording of the information in writing and sending a copy thereof to the official superior may get postponed by a reasonable period, that is after the search, entry and seizure. The question is one of urgency and expediency.

The principles applied by the Court in *Karnail Singh* (*Supra*) is applicable in respect of all cases under NDPS Act and also to the relevant provisions of other related Acts therein.

The circumstances and arrests in cases under NDPS Act are also urgent situations where the raiding team needs to comply with the provisions as required under the law, may be not immediately but at the earliest. The procedure involved there requires quick action or else the whole operation shall fail. The situation faced by the officers of the raiding is believable but leaving the column's in the memo of Arrest is not a solution as it

violates the principle of natural justice and is an abuse of process of law.

Accordingly we direct that all the Superintendent of Police/ Commissioner of Police in the State of West Bengal will ensure that the officers diligently fill in all the columns in the respective memo of Arrests by stating the actual situation and will ensure that no columns are left blank.

The concerned Sp's and Cp's will take up the matter in the monthly crime conference and will supervise these cases seriously and also take all updates in such cases on regular basis. The matter be also brought to the notice of Director General of Police, West Bengal, who shall issue appropriate directions as per our observations in this order.

We are thus of the view that such technicalities in cases of such nature does not entitle the accused to get benefit under NDPS Act, when charged with offences of commercial quantity of Narcotics.

It is the duty of the Courts and also all stake holders to take necessary steps to ensure justice. It is our collective duty to correct the technical errors by guiding the respective authorities to carry out their duties in accordance with law.

Thus considering the materials on record and the nature of the case the prayer for bail stands rejected.

[SHAMPA DUTT (PAUL), J.]

(RAJARSHI BHARADWAJ, J.)