

BA TMP NO.85 OF 2020

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE C.S. DIAS

FRIDAY, THE 24TH DAY OF APRIL 2020/4TH VAISAKHA, 1942

Bail Application TMP No. 85 of 2020

(CR. No. 46/2020 of Kuttanadu Excise Range, Alappuzha District)

Petitioner/ 1st Accused :

Suneesh P.K, Aged 35 Years,

S/o Soman,

AmbadyBhavanam,

NalayiramChira, Chathurthyakary, Pulinkunnu.P.O

Alappuzha District. PIN-688 504

By Adv.T.P.Pradeep.

Respondent / State &DefactoComplainant :

1. State of Kerala, represented by the Public Prosecutor, High Court of Kerala, Ernakulam-PIN- 682 031
2. Excise Inspector,Kuttanad Excise Range, Kuttanadu, Alappuzha District. PIN-688 504

By Public Prosecutor Sri.Ramesh Chand

THIS B.A. HAVING BEEN FINALLY HEARD ON 24.04.2020, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:

ORDER

This is an application filed under Section 439 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

2. The petitioner is the first accused in Crime No.46/2020 of Kuttanadu Excise Range. The petitioner is alleged to have committed the offences punishable under Secs.8(1) and (2) of the Kerala Abkari Act.

3. The prosecution case, in brief, is that: the petitioner along with the second accused were found selling arrack in a country boat. The petitioner was arrested at the spot and 5 litres of arrack was seized from him. The second accused fled away from the scene. Thus, the petitioner and the other accused have committed the above offences.

4. The petitioner was arrested on 9.4.2020. His application for bail was dismissed by the Judicial First Class Magistrate, Ramankary.

5. Heard the learned counsel for the petitioner and the learned Public Prosecutor via video-conferencing.

6. The learned counsel for the petitioner argued that

BA TMP NO.85 OF 2020

the petitioner was arrested on 9.4.2020. The investigation in the case is practically complete as against the petitioner. His continued detention is unnecessary. Hence, the petitioner may be enlarged on bail.

7. The learned Public Prosecutor opposed the application. However, he conceded the fact that the investigation as against the petitioner is almost complete. He argued that the petitioner may be released on stringent conditions.

8. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Sanjay Chandra v. CBI*** [2012 (1) SCC 40] held as follows:

"27. This Court, time and again, has stated that bail is the rule and committal to jail an exception. It is also observed that refusal of bail is a restriction on the personal liberty of the individual guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution".

9. Recently, the Honourable Supreme Court in ***Nikesh Tarachand Shah v. Union of India*** [2018 (11) SCC 1] after going back to the days of the Magna Carta and after referring to *Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v. State of Punjab* [(1980)

BA TMP NO.85 OF 2020

2 SCC 565] has reiterated the same view in ***Sanjay Chandra v. CBI (supra)***. Again, in ***P.Chidamabram v. Directorate of Enforcement*** [(2019) SCC Online SC 1549] the above proposition has been fortified.

10. After the outbreak of the Novel Corona Virus (COVID -19) pandemic in the country, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *In Re: Contagion of COVID-19 Virus In Prisons* case (Suo Motu Writ Petition (C) No.1 of 2020) observed that the issue of overcrowding of prisons is a matter of serious concern. The State Governments were directed to take adequate measures to de-congest the prisons. Following the above direction, the Home Department, Government of Kerala has promulgated order dated 25.03.2020, *inter alia*, directing the release of under-trial prisoners alleged to have committed offences punishable with punishment for seven years or less. Later, a Full Bench of this Court by order dated 25.03.2020 in W.P.(C) No.9400 of 2020 (Suo Motu), has issued directions to de-congest the prisons in the State, keeping in mind the proposition that bail is the rule and jail is the exception.

11. Having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case, particularly the fact that the petitioner has been in incarceration for the last 15 days; that the investigation in the case is practically complete as against the petitioner; that there are no antecedents against the petitioner; the legal proposition laid down by the Honourable Supreme Court in the aforesaid decisions; the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and a Full Bench of this Court to decongest prisons in view of Covid-19 pandemic, I am inclined to allow this bail application.

12. In the result this bail application is allowed, on the following conditions:-

(i) Due to the present National lock-down and the closure of Courts, the Jail Superintendent, where the petitioner is incarcerated, is directed to release the petitioner on him furnishing his permanent address and phone number and the addresses and phone numbers of his proposed sureties/immediate relatives. The petitioner shall

also file an undertaking to the Jail Superintendent that he and his sureties will execute the bail bond before the jurisdictional Court within one week of its re-opening. The Jail Superintendent after ensuring the compliance of the above conditions, shall release the petitioner to the Station House Officer of the Police Station where the crime has been registered, who shall after noting down the above details, release the petitioner. The Investigating Officer shall keep a close vigil on the whereabouts of the petitioner.

(ii) The petitioner shall within one week from the re-opening of the jurisdictional Court, if not already re-opened, execute a bond for a sum of Rs.50,000/- (Rupees fifty thousand only) with two solvent sureties for the like sum each to the satisfaction of the jurisdictional Court.

(iii) The petitioner shall appear before the Investigating Officer on all Saturdays between 10.00 a.m and 11 a.m till final report is filed.

(iv) The petitioner shall not tamper with the evidence or influence the witnesses in the case, in any manner, whatsoever.

(v) The petitioner shall not commit any offence while on bail.

(vi) The petitioner shall not leave the State of Kerala without the permission of the jurisdictional court.

(vii) Needless to mention that, if the petitioner violates any of the above conditions, the Station House Officer shall be at liberty to approach the jurisdictional Court and file appropriate application seeking for cancellation of the bail.

C.S.DIAS
JUDGE