

**IN THE COURT OF APPEAL OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST
REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA**

In the matter of an application for bail in terms of Section 83(2) of the Amended Act No.41 of 2022 to the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance No.17 of 1929.

Court of Appeal Bail Application The Officer-in-Charge
No.CA Bail/0070/23 Police Station
HC/Kurunegala Case No. Kurunegala.
BA/106/2021

COMPLAINANT

MC Kurunegala
Case No. B 1628/21

Mohomed Raveek Mohomed
Safwan
(Presently in remand custody)

SUSPECT

AND NOW BETWEEN

Mohamed Sahideen Siththi Sahira
305, Lake Road, Theliyagonna
Kurunegala.

PETITIONER

Vs

1. The Officer-in Charge
Crime Prevention Unit
Police Station,
Kurunegala.

1st -RESPONDENT

2. Harsha Madushan
Sub-Inspector
PNB Unit
Kandy.

2nd-RESPONDENT

3. The Attorney General
Attorney General's Department,
Colombo-12.

3rd-RESPONDENT

Mohomed Raveek Mohamed
Safwan

SUSPECT-4th-RESPONDENT

BEFORE : **Sampath B. Abayakoon, J.**
P. Kumararatnam, J.

COUNSEL : **Kasun Sarathchandra with Umayangi**
Indatissa for the Petitioner.
Kanishka Rajakaruna, SC for the
Respondents.

ARGUED ON : **12/07/2023.**

DECIDED ON : **06/10/2023.**

ORDER

P.Kumararatnam,J.

The Petitioner filing this Application has invoked the jurisdiction of this Court to grant bail to her husband who is the Suspect in this case upon suitable condition as this Court considers appropriate.

The Suspect was arrested on 12.06.2021 by the Police officers attached to Kurunegala Police. He was produced before the Magistrate of Kurunegala in the case bearing No. B/1628/2021.

The Suspect was arrested upon an information received by SI/Madushan of the Police Narcotics Unit Kandy. As per the information the Suspect was arrested near a house at Nazar Mawatha, Mallawapitiya. When he was apprehended he tried to run away from the scene. When the police officers checked him found a parcel in his trouser pocket. The parcel contained some substances which reacted for Heroin (Diacetylmorphine). The substance weighed about 102 grams. The Suspect was handed over along with the production to the Kurunegala Police Station for further investigation and necessary action.

The Suspect was produced and facts were reported to the Kurunegala Magistrate under Sections 54A (d) and (b) of the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance as amended by the Act No.13 of 1984.

The production had been sent to the Government Analyst Department and after analysis, the Government Analyst had forwarded the report to the Kurunegala Magistrate Court. According to the Government Analyst, 40.662 grams of pure Heroin (Diacetylmorphine) had been detected from the substance sent for the analysis.

The Petitioner has pleaded following exceptional circumstances in support of her Revision Application.

1. The Suspect has been in remand custody little more than two years.
2. The Suspect is the sole breadwinner of the family.
3. A synopsis of evidence has not been presented to the Learned Magistrate with the B report.

The Learned State Counsel submitted that the delay is not an exceptional circumstance to be considered to enlarge the suspect on bail. Further, the time spent for preparing the indictment does not constitute an exceptional circumstance. According to the State, indictment has already been forwarded to the High Court of Kurunegala on 23.01.2023.

The suspect is in remand little more than two years. According to Government Analyst Report the pure quantity of Heroin detected is 40.662grams.

Exceptional circumstances are not defined in the statute. Hence, what is exceptional circumstances must be considered on its own facts and circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

In **Ramu Thamodarampillai v. The Attorney General [2004] 3 SLR 180** the court held that:

“the decision must in each case depend on its own peculiar facts and circumstances”.

In **CA(PHC)APN 107/2018** decided on 19.03.2019 the court held that remanding for a period of one year and five months without being served with the indictment was considered inter alia in releasing the

suspect on bail. According to the Petitioner, at present her family is going through untold hardship without proper income and care.

The Section 83 of the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Act which was amended by Act No. 41 of 2022 states:

83. (1) Subject to the provisions of sections 84, 85 and subsection (2) of this section, a person suspected or accused of an offence under sections 54A and 54B of this Ordinance, shall not be released on bail by the High Court except in exceptional circumstances.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 84 and 85, a person suspected or accused of an offence under subsection (1) of section 54A and section 54B-

(a) of which the pure quantity of the dangerous drug, trafficked, imported, exported, or possessed is ten grammes or above in terms of the report issued by the Government Analyst under section 77A; and

(b) which is punishable with death or life imprisonment, shall not be released on bail except by the Court of Appeal in exceptional circumstances.

shall not be released on bail except by the Court of Appeal in exceptional circumstances.

In this case the pure quantity of Heroin detected in the production by the Government Analyst is 40.662 grams. Hence, this court has jurisdiction to consider granting of bail as per the new amendment.

The Learned Counsel for the Petitioner urged this Court to consider that detaining a suspect without any legal action for an extended period of time amounts to a violation of his fundamental rights which can be considered as an exceptional ground.

The Government Analyst Report pertaining to this case has been received by the Magistrate Court of Kurunegala on 30.12.2021. The

indictment was sent to the High Court of Kurunegala after one year and seven of the receipt of the Government Analyst Report by the Magistrate Court.

Although more than two years passed after the arrest of the Suspect, the trial has not commenced in the High Court of Kurunegala. Further, no indication of commencing the trial in near future.

In **Nasher v. Director of Public Prosecution [2020] VSCA 144** the court held that:

“a combination of delay, onerous custodial conditions, and the relative weakness of the prosecution case may, when considered with all relevant circumstances, compel the conclusion that exceptional circumstances have been established”. [Emphasis added]

The right to trial without undue delay is found in numerous international and regional human rights instruments; for example, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 14(3)(c)), the American Convention on Human Rights (Article 8(1)), the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (Article 7(1)(d)), and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 6(1)).

When a person is kept in remand without taking his or her case for trial for a considerable period of time, he or she should be released on bail pending trial. Otherwise, this will lead not only to prison overcrowding but also violates his or her fundamental rights which have been guaranteed under the Constitution.

Hence, I consider the delay more than two years in remand falls into the category of excessive and oppressive delay considering the circumstances of this case. Hence, considering all the circumstances of this case, the suspect has very good exceptional circumstances to consider this application in his favour. Further, remanding a suspect

without commencing his or her trial will prejudice his or her rights and family as well.

Offences under Section 54A(d) and 54A(b) of the Poisons Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance as amended by the Act No.13 of 1984 is no doubt serious offences but seriousness of the offence alone cannot form a ground to refuse bail. In considering these matters, the court must bear in mind the presumption of innocence.

Further, bail should never be withheld as punishment. Granting of bail is primarily at the discretion of the Courts. The discretion should be exercised with due care and caution taking into account the facts and circumstances of each case.

Considering all these factors into account, especially the period in remand, the pure quantity of Heroin detected and the circumstances of the case, I consider this an appropriate case to grant bail to the suspect. Hence, I order the suspect be granted bail with following strict conditions.

1. Cash bail of Rs.50,000/=.
2. To provide 02 sureties. They must sign a bond of two million each.
3. The suspect and the sureties must reside in the address given until conclusion of his case.
4. Not to approach any prosecution witnesses directly or indirectly or to interfere with.
5. To surrender his passport if any, to court and not to apply for a travel document. The Controller of the Immigration and Emigration is informed of the travel ban on the suspect.
6. To report to the Kurunegala Police Station on the last Sunday of every month between 9am to 1pm.
7. Any breach of these conditions is likely to result in the cancellation of his bail.

The Bail Application is allowed and the Learned High Court Judge of Kurunegala is hereby directed to enlarge the suspect on bail on the above bail conditions.

The Registrar of this Court is directed to send a copy of this order to the High Court of Kurunegala and Officer-in-Charge, the Police Station, Kurunegala.

JUDGE OF THE COURT OF APPEAL

SAMPATH B. ABAYAKOON, J.

I agree.

JUDGE OF THE COURT OF APPEAL