

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

*In the matter of an application for bail  
made under section 83 (2) of Poisons,  
Opium and Dangerous Drugs (Amendment)  
Act No. 41 of 2022.*

**Court of Appeal No:**

Dona Champika Neranjala Loku Kodikara

**CA/BAL/0129/23**

No-128/49, Meegahawatta

Wattegama South

Dikwella.

**PETITIONER**

**Magistrate Court Matara**

**Vs.**

**Case No:** BR 286/22

1. The Attorney General

Attorney General's Department

Colombo 12.

**1<sup>ST</sup> RESPONDENT**

2. The Officer in Charge,

Police Station

Dikwella.

**2<sup>ND</sup> RESPONDENT**

**AND**

Naotunnage Sachithra Nirmal

**SUSPECT-RESPONDENT**

Before : Sampath B. Abayakoon, J.  
: P. Kumararatnam, J.  
Counsel : Neranjan Jayasinghe with D.D.K.Katugampola for  
the Petitioner  
: Ridma Kuruwita, SC for the Respondents  
Inquiry on : 13-06-2023  
Order on : 29-08-2023

**Sampath B. Abayakoon, J.**

This is an application by the petitioner seeking bail for her son namely, Naotunnage Sachitra Nirmal (hereinafter referred to as the suspect) who is the suspect in the Magistrate Court of Matara Case No. BR 286/2022. The suspect has been arrested by the officers of Police Special Task Force (STF) on 25-01-2022, for an alleged offence of possession and trafficking of Heroin.

According to the B-report filed before the Magistrate of Matara by the Officer in Charge of Dikwella police in that regard, at the time of his arrest, he was having in his possession 122 grams of a substance suspected to be of Heroin, which is an offence punishable in terms section 54A of the Poisons Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance as amended.

The suspect has been in remand since, and according to the Government Analyst Report, the substance produced before the Government Analyst had been identified as a substance having 40.51 grams of diacetylmorphine, namely, Heroin.

In her application for bail before this Court, the petitioner has denied that her son was arrested as the police claimed in the B-report, or had any dangerous drug in his possession.

In her application, the petitioner has pleaded that the long incarceration of the suspect without being charged before a competent Court as a ground that should be considered as an exceptional circumstance for this Court to grant bail on the suspect.

The previous section 83 of the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance as amended by Act No. 13 of 1984 was repealed and replaced by a new section 83 by Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Act No. 41 of 2022 in the following manner.

**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.**

**(3) For the purposes of this section “dangerous drug” means Morphine, Cocaine, Heroin and Methamphetamine.**

Although, section 83 that existed until the Amendment Act No. 41 of 2022 came into being, had vested the power to grant bail for a person suspected or accused of an offence committed under section 54A or 54B of the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance to the relevant High Court under exceptional circumstances, the amendment has provided for different jurisdictions to grant bail under mentioned circumstances.

Under the provisions of section 83 (2) of the Amendment Act No. 41 of 2022, notwithstanding the provisions of sections 84 and 85, if the pure quantity of the dangerous drug trafficked, imported, exported or possessed is 10 grams or above in terms of the Government Analyst Report, in such circumstances only the Court of Appeal which has the exclusive jurisdiction to grant bail in exceptional circumstances for a person accused or suspected of committing an offence in terms of section 54 A or 54 B of the Ordinance.

For purposes of this section, a dangerous drug has been defined as Morphine, Cocaine, Heroin and Methamphetamine.

Section 84 and 85 are the provisions where it has been stipulated that a suspect or an accused shall not be detained in custody for a period exceeding 12 months from the date of arrest and up to another period of 12 months on an application made by the Attorney General to the High Court.

Since it has been established that the substance alleged to have been found in the possession of the suspect was Heroin, and had a pure quantity of 43.31 grams, this is a matter which comes within the purview of this Court to consider bail for the suspect under exceptional circumstances.

What constitutes exceptional circumstances have not been defined in the Statute.

Our Superior Courts have considered various situations at various times as exceptional in deciding to grant bail for suspects in terms of the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance.

In **CA (PHC) APN No.16-12 decided on 14-06-2012**, the Court of Appeal considered failing to file an indictment even one year after the receipt of the Government Analyst Report as relevant in granting bail for a suspect.

However, it needs to be noted that there are several other instances where the Court of Appeal did not consider the time period a suspect person has been incarcerated as relevant exceptional circumstances in order to grant bail.

In the case of **CA (PHC) APN No. 9-2010 decided on 19-07-2010**, the Court of Appeal considered the facts reported by the police in the B-report as relevant to consider whether there are exceptional circumstances to grant bail to a suspect. Similarly, there are judgements, which say that facts cannot be considered as exceptional circumstances.

The above varied decisions by our Superior Courts clearly establish the fact that whether a certain situation amounts to exceptional circumstances or not, has to be considered on a case-by-case basis, unique to each application before the Court.

It is the view of this Court that if the relevant B-report and other material placed before the Court by the relevant investigation authority, provides a sufficient basis to consider granting bail to a suspect, there exists no impediment for this Court to consider them as relevant in determining whether exceptional circumstances exist under a given situation.

In this matter, the suspect had been arrested and produced on 25-01-2022 and the Government Analyst Report dated 29-04-2022 has been received by

the Magistrate Court according to the date stamp on the report, on 01-06-2022.

According to the submission made before the Court by the learned State Counsel, the Attorney General's department has not yet received the relevant extracts of the investigation to the Department to consider forwarding an indictment against the suspect. It is informed that the relevant Dikwella police has to sent it through the Police Narcotic Bureau (PNB). There is no indication whether the Dikwella police has sent the relevant material even to the PNB as yet.

This Court is of the view that the alleged offence committed by the suspect as mentioned in the B-report provides no basis to consider that this is a complicated matter where investigations have to be conducted extensively.

There is no indication whether the police have concluded their investigations and how long it will take them to forward the relevant extracts to the Hon. Attorney General and how long it will take to decide as to whether the suspect will be indicted or not, given the time so far taken by the investigative agency in this matter.

There cannot be any argument that the possible charge or charges against the suspect are serious where the penalty would be, if convicted, either death or life in prison. That is the very reason that the legislature by its wisdom has imposed very strict bail conditions for a suspect accused of committing an offence under the Ordinance.

Under the circumstances, I am of the view that the investigative agencies have an additional responsibility of making sure that no person is kept in remand unnecessarily without being charged in a competent Court of law, enabling that person to plead to the charge and seek redress from the Court.

I am of the view that when it comes to the circumstances of this case, the delay in conducting proper investigations provides a sufficient exceptional circumstance to grant bail to the suspect.

Accordingly, the suspect is ordered to be released on the following strict bail conditions.

1. Cash bail Rs. 100,000/=
2. Two sureties with Rs. 250,000/= each surety bail. One of the sureties should be the petitioner.
3. The suspect is ordered to report to the OIC of Dikwella Police Station on every last Sunday of the month between 9.00 a.m. and 12 noon.
4. The suspect is prevented from traveling overseas until the conclusion of the trial against him. If he is possessed of a passport, he shall surrender the passport to the Registrar of the Magistrate Court of Matara. If he has not obtained a passport, he shall file an affidavit in that regard.
5. The Registrar of the Magistrate Court of Matara is directed to inform the Controller of Immigration and Emigration that a travel ban has been imposed on the suspect until the conclusion of the case, and is also ordered to provide the necessary details in this regard to the Controller.

Registrar of the Court is directed to communicate this bail order to the Magistrate Court of Matara for necessary compliance.

Judge of the Court of Appeal

**P. Kumararatnam, J.**

I agree.

Judge of the Court of Appeal