

Compliance of section 42 N.D.P.S. Act

It has been held by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Sukhdev Singh Vs. State of Haryana**, Criminal Appeal No. 2118 of 2008, decided on **13-12-2012**, that the investigating officers shall duly comply with the provisions of Section 42 of NDPS Act at the appropriate stage to avoid acquittals in such cases.

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Bench

Hon'ble Mr Justice Swatanter Kumar, J.

Hon'ble Mr Justice Madan B. Lokur, J.

Per Swatanter Kumar, J.

Held:

“19. This question is no more res integra and stands fully answered by the Constitution Bench judgment of this Court in **Karnail Singh v. State of Haryana [(2009) 8 SCC 539]**. The Constitution Bench had the occasion to consider the conflict between the two judgments i.e. in the case of **Abdul Rashid Ibrahim Mansuri v. State of Gujarat [(2000) 2 SCC 513]** and Sajan Abraham (supra) and held as under:-

“35. In conclusion, what is to be noticed is that Abdul Rashid did not require literal compliance with the requirements of Sections 42(1) and 42(2) nor did Sajan Abraham hold that the requirements of Sections 42(1) and 42(2) need not be fulfilled at all. The effect of the two decisions was as follows:

(a) The officer on receiving the information [of the nature referred to in sub-section (1) of Section 42] from any person had to record it in writing in the register concerned and forthwith send a copy to his immediate official superior, before proceeding to take action in terms of clauses (a) to (d) of Section 42(1).

(b) But if the information was received when the officer was not in the police station, but while he was on the move either on patrol duty or otherwise, either by mobile phone, or other means, and the information calls for immediate action and any delay would have resulted in the goods or evidence being removed or destroyed, it would not be feasible or practical to take down in writing the information given to him, in such a situation, he could take action as per clauses (a) to (d) of Section 42(1) and thereafter, as soon as it is practical, record the information in writing and forthwith inform the same to the official superior.

(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.

(d) While total non-compliance with requirements of sub-sections (1) and (2) of Section 42 is impermissible, delayed compliance with satisfactory explanation about the delay will be acceptable compliance with Section 42. To illustrate, if any delay may result in the accused escaping or the goods or evidence being destroyed or removed, not recording in writing the information received, before initiating action, or non-sending of a copy of such information to the official superior forthwith, may not be treated as violation of Section 42. But if the information was received when the police officer was in the police station with sufficient time to take action, and if the police officer fails to record in writing the information received, or fails to send a copy thereof, to the official superior, then it will be a suspicious circumstance being a clear violation of Section 42 of the Act. Similarly, where the police officer does not record the information at all, and does not inform the official superior at all, then also it will be a clear violation of Section 42 of the Act. Whether there is adequate or substantial compliance with Section 42 or not is a question of fact to be decided in each case. The above position got strengthened with the amendment to Section 42 by Act 9 of 2001.”

23. Once the contraband is recovered, then there are other provisions like Section 57 which the empowered officer is mandatorily required to comply with. That itself to some extent would minimize the purpose and effectiveness of Section 42 of the NDPS Act. It is to provide fairness in the process of recovery and investigation which is one of the basic features of our criminal jurisprudence. It is a kind of prevention of false implication of innocent persons. The legislature in its wisdom had made the provisions of Section 42 of NDPS Act mandatory and not optional as stated by this Court in the case of Karnail Singh (supra).

25. Before we part with this file, we consider it the duty of the Court to direct the Director General of Police concerned of all the States to issue appropriate instructions directing the investigating officers to duly comply with the provisions of Section 42 of NDPS Act at the appropriate stage to avoid such acquittals. Compliance to the provisions of Section 42 being mandatory, it is the incumbent duty of every investigating officer to comply with the same in true substance and spirit in consonance with the law stated by this Court in the case of Karnail Singh (supra).

26. The Registry shall send a copy of this judgment to all the Director Generals of Police of the States for immediate compliance.”
