## IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

In the matter of an Application in terms of Articles 17 and 126 of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

 Dr. Kamal Bandula Weerapperuma Bogaha Handiya, Kiri Ibban Ara, Sewanagala.

### SC FR Application No: 127/2016

- 2. L. D. Susila Wejewardena
- 3. H. A. Karunawathie
- 4. P. A. Wimalaratne

2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Petitioners: Presently at: Remand Prison, Tangalle.

 R. A. Upali No. 630, Kiri Ibban Ara, Sevanagala.

#### **Petitioners**

### V.

 A. Pushpakumara Deputy Commissioner of Excise, Excise Head Office, No. 28, Staple Street, Colombo 02.

- Rohan Wijeratne
   Excise Superintendent (Special Operations),
   Excise Head Office,
   No. 28,
   Staple Street,
   Colombo 02.
- Nandana Perera OIC of the Excise Narcotics Division, No. 15, Park Avenue, Boralla, Colombo 08.
- 4. Thilak Kumara Disanayaka Excise Inspector, Excise Narcotics Division, No. 15, Park Avenue, Boralla, Colombo 08.
- N. S. Ratnayaka (673) Excise Guard, No. 15, Park Avenue, Boralla, Colombo 08.
- T. Chaminda (827) Excise Guard, No. 15, Park Avenue, Boralla, Colombo 08.
- 7. Asanka Bandara (897) Excise Guard, No. 15, Park Avenue, Boralla, Colombo 08.
- Nalin Priyankara (962) Excise Guard, No. 15, Park Avenue,

Boralla, Colombo 08.

- Priyadarshana (753) Excise Guard, No. 15, Park Avenue, Boralla, Colombo 08.
- 10. Dilruk Excise Driver, No. 15, Park Avenue, Boralla, Colombo 08.
- L. K. G. Gunawardena Commissioner General of Excise No. 34, W. A. D. Ramanayeka Mawatha, Colombo 02.
- 12. Commissioner of Ayurveda Department of Ayurveda, Old Kottawa Road, Navinna, Maharagama.
- Hon. Attorney General Attorney General's Department, Colombo 12.

### **Respondents**

<u>Before</u>	:	P. Padman Surasena, J Shiran Gooneratne, J K. Priyantha Fernando, J	
<u>Counsel</u>	:	Ronald Perera, PC with Dushit Johnthasan, Ravi Kanagasabai and Nipuni Gajasinghe for the Petitioner.	
		Induni Punchihewa, SC for the Respondents.	

Argued on	:	09.07.2024
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**Decided on** : 11.10.2024

# K. PRIYANTHA FERNANDO, J

- 1. The 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners have filed the instant application alleging that, the fundamental rights guaranteed to them in terms of Articles 12(1), 13(1) and 14(1)(g) of the Constitution have been violated by the 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> respondents in carrying out an illegal raid of the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner's Ayurvedic pharmacy, preventing the petitioners from being engaged in their lawful business and the arbitrary and unlawful arrest of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners.
- 2. This Court granted leave to proceed for the alleged violation of Articles 12(1) and 14(1)(g) of the Constitution by the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> respondents.
- 3. The 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner states that, he is an Ayurvedic practitioner registered with the Ayurvedic Medical Council and is the proprietor of the business "*Kamalge Sevanagala Aushadha*" which carries on the business of manufacturing, packaging and marketing several Ayurvedic drugs and medicines. He is also the proprietor of the Ayurvedic pharmacy called and known as *Sevanagala Ayurveda Aushadha Nishpadanagaraya* (hereinafter referred to as the pharmacy), which is duly registered. The 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners are employees of the said pharmacy.
- 4. The petitioner further states that, by the Certificate of Registration of the Pharmacy [P-5], he has been permitted to manufacture, prepare or compound ayurvedic drugs or medicine including *Thaila (oil), Arishta, Syrup, Choorna, Kalka (paste) and Modaka* in accordance with the Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia, using *Kansa Choorna* (cannabis powder) issued by Ayurvedic Drugs Corporation, at the said Ayurvedic Pharmacy situated at *Sevanagala.*

- 5. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016, four persons dressed in civvies including the 5<sup>th</sup> respondent, who had introduced themselves as a team of police officers from the Narcotics Division had arrived at the said pharmacy at about 9.30 a.m. and inquired from the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner's employees as to whether they were pounding 'ganja' (cannabis). At the time of the incident, the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner has not been present at the premises. The employees who were questioned had denied that they were pounding cannabis and had clarified that what they had in their possession was Kansa Choorna (A mixture consisting cannabis powder) which was purchased from the Drugs Corporation, Ayurvedic with approval from the Commissioner of Ayurveda.
- 6. The petitioners state that, despite the denial of these allegations, the 5<sup>th</sup> respondent had refused to hear them and had instead abused them in foul language. There was also no search warrant produced by the respondents. Subsequently, the 5<sup>th</sup> respondent and the team of officers had ordered all the employees to go into a small room in the premises, and had taken into custody the mobile phones of all the employees.
- 7. Thereafter, at about 12.30 p.m. another team of officers led by the 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent arrived at the premises of the pharmacy. Despite the manager of the pharmacy producing the certificate issued by the Department of Ayurveda [P-5], the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> respondents disregarding the same, had seized the said *Kansa Choorna* that was at the pharmacy. The petitioners emphasized that at the time the items were seized by the officers, they had not been sealed.
- 8. According to the affidavits of the eyewitnesses (employees of the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner), the 3<sup>rd</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> respondents have impersonated themselves as Narcotics Officers of the police, although they are from the Excise Department.
- 9. However as per affidavit P-14, upon contacting the police Narcotics Bureau over the telephone, witness *Chamal Eranga Weeraperruma* the eldest son of the petitioner has got it confirmed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> respondents are not from the Police Narcotics Bureau.

- 10. The 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner further states that, during the pendency of the raid, one *Bambara Ralahamy* who is known to the 1<sup>st</sup> Petitioner has informed his elder son *Chamal Eranga Weeraperruma* that if money is paid to the officers, this matter can be sorted out without proceeding to Court. However, the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner's elder son has refused to pay the money and upon telephoning the police emergency, the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner's son has become aware that the team of officers who conducted this raid were not police officers, but were officers of the Excise Department.
- 11. The petitioners state that, after the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner's son *Chamal Eranga Weerapperuma* refused to pay the sum of money demanded by the 5<sup>th</sup> respondent, the team of officers led by the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respondents had removed and taken into their custody, the DVR of the CCTV camera system installed at the pharmacy. They had also taken into their custody, two grinding machines used to grind medicine and a tractor engine used to operate the grinding machine.
- 12. The petitioners further state that, before the 3<sup>rd</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> respondents left the pharmacy premises, the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> respondents threatened the employees to find new jobs and not come for work thereafter and have stated that they will not allow the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner to do any business in the future.
- 13. It is the position of the petitioners that, they believed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> to-10<sup>th</sup> respondents may have maliciously introduced *ganja* (cannabis) into the unsealed items seized from the said pharmacy to implicate the petitioners, due to their anger and animosity at the petitioner's elder son's refusal to pay the bribe demanded by the 5<sup>th</sup> respondent.
- 14. Thereafter, the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> petitioners had been arrested at the premises of the pharmacy, and were taken into the custody of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> respondents. The 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> respondents have loaded the items seized by them into a lorry of the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner. The 5<sup>th</sup> petitioner who was a driver, was asked to drive the lorry to the Excise Unit of *Embilipitiya* by the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> respondents. Later, the

 $5^{th}$  petitioner too was arrested at the said unit and was taken into custody by the  $3^{rd}$  to  $9^{th}$  respondents.

- 15. On B-Report No.440/16 [P-15], the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> petitioners were produced before the Magistrate's Court of *Embilipitiya* on 24.03 2016, alleging that they were in possession of 25 kg and 100 g of cannabis and that they have committed an offence punishable under the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Act No.13 of 1984. As per the B-Report [P-15], the Excise Officers have sought remand of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> petitioners and thereby the learned Magistrate had ordered remanding till 01.04.2016.
- 16. On B-Report No.441/2016 [P-16], the 4<sup>th</sup> petitioner was also produced before the Magistrate's Court of *Embilipitiya* on 24.03.2016, for having in possession 261kg and 300g of mixture consisting of cannabis and was sought for remand. Thereafter, the 4<sup>th</sup> petitioner was also remanded by the learned Magistrate.
- As per the charge sheet marked [P-17], the 5<sup>th</sup> petitioner was also charged in the Magistrate's Court on 24.03.2016, for having in possession 60kg of mixture consisting of cannabis.
- 18. The 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent who is the officer in charge of the Excise Narcotics Division, in his affidavit dated 23.10.2018 states that, he was a part of the second team of officers that visited the pharmacy on 23.03.2016, which was the day on which the raid was carried out. He also admits that, he had arrested and taken into custody the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners.
- 19. The 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent takes the position that, the operation of the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner's pharmacy is not lawful in nature. He denies the fact that *Sevanagala Ayurveda Aushadha Nishpadanagaraya* is a duly registered pharmacy as at 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016. The respondent vehemently denies the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioners position that he has been authorized to sell, possess, use, transfer and store *modaka* and other medicines using cannabis. He further states that, the substance taken into custody by him were not lawfully manufactured products. It is the position of the 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent that, no blanket permission is given under the law for

manufacturing of medicine by virtue of [P-5] and that manufacturing of medicine would be subjected to different rules and regulations according to law.

- 20. It is the position of the petitioners that, the series of acts that have been described in the petition and the subsequent conduct of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> respondents clearly established the fact that they have acted arbitrarily, abusing their authority. It is the position of the petitioners that, these series of events are in violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the petitioners in terms of Articles 12 (1) and 14(1)(g) of the Constitution.
- 21. The 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner in his counter affidavit dated 10.06.2019 states that, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> respondents have failed to file affidavits nor has the 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent in his affidavit affirmed on behalf of the other respondents. Therefore, it is the position of the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner that the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> respondents are deemed to have admitted all averments in the petition dated 22.04.2016.

## <u>Alleged Violation of Article 14(1)(g) of the petitioners</u>

22. The learned President's Counsel for the petitioners in his written submissions submitted that, the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> respondents have totally disregarded the fact that the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner has a registered Ayurvedic Pharmacy, and was lawfully entitled to practice his profession by manufacturing medicine using Kansa Choorna as revealed through the 'Certificate of Registration as an Ayurvedic practitioner' obtained from the Ayurvedic Medical Council [P-1a], [P-1b], Certificate of Registration of the business [P-4] and Certificate of Registration of the Ayurvedic pharmacy [P-5]. The learned President's Counsel for the petitioners further submitted that, the respondents have also acted unlawfully, arbitrarily and malafide in the unlawful raid without considering and disregarding the invoices marked [P-10(i)] to [P-10(xxxiii)], which revealed that the Kansa Choorna seized were in fact lawfully purchased.

- 23. It is alleged by the petitioners that, the 3<sup>rd</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> respondents by raiding the pharmacy, seizing its equipment, and arresting its employees, have violated the rights guaranteed to the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner under Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution.
- 24. Further, it is also the position of the learned President's Counsel for the petitioners that the arrest of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners by the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> respondents, the seizure of the medicine, equipment and the vehicle by them at the raid violates the rights of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners guaranteed under of Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution.
- 25. The learned State Counsel for the 3<sup>rd</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> respondents was of the position that, the acts of the respondents do not violate the petitioners' rights under Article 14(1)(g) nor Article 12(1) as they were strictly in pursuance of a raid regarding an offence made under the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. Further, it was submitted that although the petitioners have stated that the alleged violations were committed by the 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> respondents, no specific allegations were pursued in the petition dated 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016 against the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> respondents.
- 26. The learned State Counsel in her written submissions filed on behalf of the respondents submitted that, the document [P-5], which is the Certificate of Registration of the Ayurvedic Pharmacy is only valid up to the year 2015. The learned State Counsel submitted that, there was no Certificate of Registration obtained for the year 2016, which is the year in which the raid took place. It was her submission that therefore, the petitioners have failed to establish the lawful nature of the business. On that basis, the learned State Counsel submitted that the petitioners cannot seek redress under Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution, as his trade was unlawful in nature.
- 27. It was submitted by the learned State Counsel for the respondents that, the Ayurvedic Drugs Corporation does not issue *Kansa Choorna* in its pre-formed state to the registered Ayurvedic pharmacies. It was therefore questioned as to why the petitioners

were allegedly found in possession of such illicit drugs, particularly given the quantities involved.

- 28. Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution provides that, "every citizen is entitled to the freedom to engage by himself or in association of others in any lawful occupation, profession, trade, business or enterprise."
- 29. In Vasudewa Nanayakkara v. Choksy, Minister of Finance and others (SC/FR/209/2007, SC Minutes of 13.10.2009) Bandaranayake J. (as she was then), quoting the pronouncement of Lord Denning in Nagle v. Feilden and others ([1966] 1 All E.R. 689 at page 694) stated that,

"...a man's right to work at his trade or profession is just as important to him as, perhaps more important than, his rights of property. Just as the courts will intervene to protect his rights of property, so they will also intervene to protect his right to work.

...It is therefore the paramount duty of Courts to ensure that a citizen's right to work is protected. The right to employment being a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution, it would be the duty of the Court to exercise their authority in the interest of the individual citizen and of the general public to safeguard that right."

30. When considering the case at hand, the respondents assert that there was no violation of Article 14(1)(g), contending that the petitioners' trade was not lawful in nature. They claim that the unlawfulness of the petitioners' trade arises from the assertion that the certificate of registration is only valid up to the year 2015. However, when considering the Certificate of Registration [P-5], which has been obtained on the 04.12.2015 in a timely manner, is valid through 01.01.2016 to 31.12.2016. Therefore, it is clear that the petitioners have provided the certificate of registration of the pharmacy valid for the year 2016 which includes the date on which the raid was carried out. Therefore, the respondents' claim on unlawfulness of trade cannot stand.

- In his affidavit [P-12,] Viraj Sanjeewa who is an employee of 31. "Sevangala Ayurveda Aushadha Nishpadanagaraya" states that the 5<sup>th</sup> respondent, has threatened the employees to find new jobs and not to come to work thereafter. He has also threatened stating that they will not allow the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner to do any business in the future. This has been confirmed by the employees' affidavits [P-12] and [P-13]. These affidavits confirm that the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> respondents have acted with malice and that the rest of the raiding party have connived with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> respondents. In his affidavit dated 19.10.2018, the 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent has admitted being the Chief Investigator who headed the raid. He has also admitted that the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> respondents loaded the productions to the lorry. Those productions include the CCTV cameras and DVR. The raiding party has also taken the 1<sup>st</sup> respondents lorry as a production.
- 32. Thus, by carrying out an illegal raid, disrupting the functioning of the pharmacy, seizing its substances and equipment and arresting its employees, the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner has been deprived from engaging in his lawful occupation. Hence, the 3<sup>rd</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> respondents who have actively participated in the raid have violated Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution guaranteed to the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner.
- 33. When considering the alleged violation of Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution in respect of the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners, it is alleged that, the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> respondents have affected the raid and have arrested and taken into their custody the 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> petitioners who were employees of the said pharmacy which was subjected to the raid. It is also observed that, even at the time of filing the petition, the  $2^{nd}$  -  $5^{th}$  petitioners have been in remand at the prison in *Tangalle*. Further, admittedly The Hon. Attorney General has decided not to proceed against the 2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> petitioners. Thus, when considering the facts and circumstances of this case, and given the persistent harassment and incarceration that has been meted out in respect of the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners, the respondents have clearly deprived the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners from engaging in their lawful occupation by taking them into custody and holding them in remand prison. This is violative of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the  $2^{nd}$  –

 $5^{\text{th}}$  petitioners in terms of Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution. Therefore, the  $3^{\text{rd}} - 10^{\text{th}}$  respondents have violated Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution, which is guaranteed to the  $2^{\text{nd}} - 5^{\text{th}}$  petitioners.

34. Thus, as the petitioners were engaged in a lawful trade and the acts of the 3rd to 10<sup>th</sup> respondents have infringed the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> petitioners' right to engage in such lawful occupation, the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> respondents have violated Article 14(1)(g) of the Constitution guaranteed to the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> petitioners.

# Alleged Violation of Article 12(1)

- 35. It is submitted on behalf of the petitioners that, the raid and arrest carried out on a purported basis of a violation of the aforementioned sections in the Poisons, Opium and Dangerous Drugs Act is without legal basis, is arbitrary, illegal and is in violation of the fundamental rights of the petitioners guaranteed by Article 12(1).
- 36. Article 12(1) of the Constitution provides that, "All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law."
- 37. In case of Ariyawansa and others v. The People's Bank and others [2006] 2 Sri LR 145 at 152 Bandaranayake J. stated that,

"The concepts of negation of arbitrariness and unreasonableness are embodied in the right to equality as it has been decided that any action or law which is arbitrary or unreasonable violates equality."

38. In the instant case, the government analyst report A077394 dated 30.06.2017 submitted to the Magistrate's Court [P-44] sets out that, the polythene packet marked [S1] containing powdered dried vegetable matter, contained parts of the hemp plant (Cannabis Sativa) and only 0.29% of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Therefore,

the substance discovered at the pharmacy by the respondents was evidently a mixture and not cannabis in its pure form. Although the respondents alleged the substance to be pure cannabis, the government analyst report disproves this allegation by confirming that it was in fact a mixture and not cannabis in its pure form.

- 39. The document marked [P-16] includes the investigation report filed by the Excise Narcotics Division, the list of productions and also the proceeding in the Magistrates Court on 24.03 2016. As per P-16 in case No. B 440/2016, upon which the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> petitioners were produced before the Magistrate, Excise Officer 962 Nalin Priyankara (the 8<sup>th</sup> Respondent) has appeared for the prosecution. Making his submissions before the learned Magistrate, he has stated that, "ස්වාමිනී, කංසා චූර්ණය කියන්නේ කංසා සහ වෙනත් දේවල් මිශු කරපු දේවල්. මේ ටික පිරිසිදු ගංජා විදියට ඉදිරිපත් කරන්නේ. කිසිදු දෙයක් කලවම කරන්නේ නැතිව." This clearly demonstrates his malice and how he placed the incorrect facts before the Magistrate to mislead Court in order to get the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> petitioners remanded.
- 40. The learned Counsel for the petitioners state that, the arrest was carried out maliciously as the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner's elder son *Chamal Eranga Weeraperruma* refused to pay the bribe demanded by the respondents to amicably settle the matter. The affidavit of the driver of the 1<sup>st</sup> Petitioner [P-12] clearly demonstrates that the 5<sup>th</sup> respondent has tried to obtain the bribe. (para 7 and 8 of P-12)

"ඉන් අනතුරුව මාත් සුමනසිරි නම් තවත් සේවකයෙකුත් එම නිළධාරියා සමහ අදාල කාමරයෙන් එලියට ආ අතර ඒ අවස්ථාවේ එකී රත්නායක යන නිලධාරියා අප එම ස්ථානයේ ගංජා කොටන බවත් මේ පුශ්නය ගොඩින් විසදා ගැනිම සඳහා " බොස්ට එන්න කියන්න " කියා පැවසූ බව මා පුකාශ කර සිටිමි."

"ඒ අවුසථාවේ මාත් මා සමහ සිටි සුමතසිරි නම් සේවකයාත් එම නිලධාරියාගෙන් අසා සිටියේ "ගොඩින් බේරගන්න" යනුවෙන් අදහස් කලේ කුමක්ද කියායි. එවිට එම නිලධාරියා අපට පුකාශ කලේ ගානක් අරන් මේක ඉවරයක් කිරීමට ඔහුට හැකි බවයි." 41. In case of **Sasanasiritissa Thero v P.A. de Silva [1989] 2** SLR,356, Kulatunga, J explained that,

> "in its narrow sense, mala fide means personal animosity, spite, vengeance, personal benefit to the authority itself or its relations or friends, the phrase is used by Courts in the broad sense of any improper exercise or abuse of power."

- 42. In light of that, one of the most critical aspects to address is with regard to the dates associated with the B-Report 440/16 [P15] and B Report 441/16 [P16]. Both reports are dated 21.03.2016. However, the raid and the subsequent arrest of the petitioners occurred on 23.03.2016. This discrepancy in the dates suggests that the reports were prepared in advance by the respondents, indicating maliciousness of the respondents to arrest the petitioners through the raid. Although this issue came to light during the hearing of this case on 09.07.2024, the learned State Counsel for the respondents was not in a position to clarify as to how the date of the B reports were shown as 21.03.2016.
- 43. It is pertinent to note that The Hon. Attorney General, upon completing the relevant investigations, has decided not to proceed on all charges levelled against the petitioners for the aforementioned allegations. This decision clearly demonstrates the innocence of the petitioners and highlights that they endured this unjust treatment as a result of the malicious conduct of the respondents.
- 44. Furthermore, it has been submitted that a team of officers led by the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respondents have removed the CCTV equipment from the pharmacy premises without any justification or explanation seemingly to torment the petitioners. These actions further show malice on the part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respondents. The 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent in his affidavit has failed to explain as to why the DVR of the CCTV camera system was removed. However, in his affidavit dated 22.04.2016 [P-12], employee *Viraj Sanjeewa* has deposed as to how and why the cameras were removed.

- 45. It is also observed that other than the 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent, the other respondents have not filed their objections (affidavits) denying the allegations levelled against them as submitted by the learned President's Counsel.
- 46. Thus, the arbitrariness of the raid, the arrest made without legal basis and without good reason and the malicious conduct of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> violate the equal protection guaranteed to the petitioners in terms of Article 12(1) of the Constitution.
- 47. Therefore, when considering the above facts and circumstances it is evident that the 3<sup>rd</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> respondents have acted maliciously and arbitrarily thus, violating Article 12(1) of the Constitution guaranteed to the petitioners.

# **Declaration and Compensation**

- 48. No specific allegations have been levelled against the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> respondents. Upon careful consideration it can be deduced that, the petitioners have failed to prove that the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> respondents have violated the petitioners' rights under Article 12(1) and 14(1)(g) of the Constitution.
- 49. For the reasons aforementioned, I declare that the fundamental rights that have been guaranteed to the 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners under Articles 12(1) and 14(1)(g) of the Constitution have been violated by the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> respondents.
- 50. As per Article 126(4) of the Constitution, the Supreme Court is empowered to grant such relief as it may deem just and equitable in the circumstances in respect of any petition referred to it under Article 126(2) of the Constitution. Therefore, in the circumstances of this case, considering the discomfort and the losses that were suffered by the petitioners due to the arbitrary and malicious acts of the respondents, the state is directed to pay a sum of Rs. 10,000 each to the 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners.

- 51. I order each of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respondents to pay Rs.400,000 (a total sum of Rs.1,200,000) to the 1<sup>st</sup> petitioner from their personal funds.
  I further order, each of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respondents to pay Rs. 100,000 each to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> petitioners each out of their personal funds.
  The compensation is to be paid to the petitioners within three months from the pronouncement of this judgment.
- 52. I direct the Excise Department to take disciplinary action against the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respondents.
- 53. I further direct the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) to initiate investigations into the alleged solicitation of bribe by the respondents that are responsible for the same.
- 54. The Registrar is directed to forward a copy of this judgment to the Commissioner General of Excise and the Director General of the CIABOC.

## JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT

### JUSTICE P. PADMAN SURASENA

I agree

### JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT

#### JUSTICE SHIRAN GOONERATNE

I agree

#### JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT