



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

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CRM-M-51584-2025 (O&M)
Date of decision: 13.11.2025

Ashok Panjabi

...Petitioner(s)

VERSUS

State of Punjab

...Respondent(s)

CORAM : HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VINOD S. BHARDWAJ

Present :- Mr. P.S. Ahluwalia, Sr. Advocate with
Mr. Roshneet Singh Brar, Advocate;
Mr. Umesh Aggarwal, Advocate for the petitioner(s).

Mr. Mohit Kapoor, Sr. DAG Punjab.

VINOD S. BHARDWAJ, J. (Oral)

1. The instant petition has been filed for grant of regular bail to the petitioner(s) in case bearing FIR No.118 dated 17.06.2025, registered under Section(s) 21(b), 27(a), 29 [(Sections 21(c), 27(A) added later on)] of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 at Police Station Chheharta, District Amritsar.

2. Short reply by way of affidavit dated 12.11.2025 on behalf of respondent(s)-State has been filed by the learned State counsel today in the Court and the same is taken on record.

3. As per the case of the prosecution, a chance recovery of 102 grams of heroin along with drug money of ₹2,800 was effected from two



young boys on 17.06.2025, who disclosed their identities as Gagandeep Singh @ Gagan and Jashanpreet Singh @ Jashan. During interrogation, both allegedly confessed that they had procured the contraband from Gursahib Singh, the uncle of co-accused Jashanpreet Singh @ Jashan. On the basis of this disclosure, a further recovery of 60 kilograms of heroin was allegedly made, resulting in the arrest of Gursahib Singh, who was taken into police custody. It is further alleged that Gursahib Singh disclosed that payment for the contraband had been routed through two individuals - Lakshman @ Lucky and Yashu Mehta. An amount of ₹9 lakh is stated to have been transferred by Lakshman @ Lucky to Yashu Mehta through the petitioner, leading to the petitioner's nomination as an accused in the present case.

4. Learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioner contends that Lakshman @ Lucky, who runs a mobile shop, had certain pending payments to be made to Yashu Mehta for the supply of mobile phones, and those payments were routinely routed through the petitioner in the normal course of business. It is submitted that, upon completion of investigation, the police found that Lakshman @ Lucky and Yashu Mehta had no involvement in the alleged drug transaction, and both were accordingly discharged vide order dated 18.07.2025 (Annexure P-3) passed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge, Amritsar. Counsel submits that the petitioner has been nominated as an accused solely on the basis of the disclosure statement of Lakshman @ Lucky and only because the petitioner acted as an intermediary for a legitimate financial transaction between Lakshman @ Lucky and



Yashu Mehta. Hence, there is no link of the petitioner with the drug trade that took place inter se between the Jashanpreet Singh @ Jashan, Gagandeep Singh and Gursahib Singh.

5. Learned State Counsel, referring to the short reply dated 12.11.2025, submits that the petitioner suffered as disclosure statement to the effect that while working in Dubai in 2022, he came into contact with one Dharminder, who was involved in arranging payments through a token-based hawala network. It is contended that the petitioner allegedly exchanged contact numbers with the said Dharminder and that he subsequently facilitated payments through this hawala channel. The relevant extract of the said short reply reads thus:-

“11. That the deponent humbly submits that during the course of investigation of the present case FIR No. 118, dated 17.06.2025 (supra) based on the disclosure statement dated 30.06.2025 of the accused Gursahib Singh, 200 grams of heroin was recovered from a vacant plot at Grain Market, Bhagtanwala, Amritsar, which was taken into police possession.

12. That the deponent humbly submits that during the course of investigation of the present case FIR No. 118, dated 17.06.2025 (supra), the above said co-accused Laxman @ Lucky was arrested on 03.07.2025 from his residential house at Ganesh Park, Partap Nagar, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. He was produced before the jurisdictional learned Court and his police



remand was obtained and he was subjected to interrogation. During interrogation of the accused Laxman @ Lucky, the name of the present petitioner Ashok Panjabi and one Manish Dhaga S/o Murlighar Dhaga Rio Ram Mohall, Nagori Gate, Jodhpur, Rajasthan were also figured being the persons who were involved in receiving drug money. Therefore, they both were also nominated as co-accused.

13. *That the deponent humbly submits that during the course of investigation of the present case FIR No. 118, dated 17.06.2025 (supra), the present petitioner Ashok Panjabi was arrested on 11.07.2025 from his residential address at Jodhpur, Rajasthan. During personal search of the present petitioner Ashok Panjabi, one mobile phone make One Plus having SIM No. 87419-36737 and +971-52-765-3328 was recovered, which was taken into police possession in accordance with law. The present petitioner Ashok Panjabi was produced before the jurisdictional learned Court and his police remand was obtained.*

14. *That during further interrogation, the present petitioner Ashok Punjabi made disclosure statement dated 14.07.2025 before SHO PS Chheharta, Amritsar that in the year 2022, while working in Dubai, he came in contact with one Dharminder, resident of Ajmer. Dharminder was engaged in arranging payments through token-based hawala channels and*



exchanged contact numbers with the accused. After returning to India, in late 2024 Dharminder contacted him and directed him to collect payments lying in Jodhpur. Pursuant to token details sent through WhatsApp, he (petitioner) collected ₹2,00,000 and handed it over to a person sent by Dharminder. Thereafter, he started collecting similar payments regularly. That subsequently, the petitioner Ashok Panjabi met Manish Dhaga of Jodhpur, who disclosed that he was running a hawala network and asked the petitioner to collect payments on his behalf as well, in lieu of commission. The petitioner Ashok Panjabi joined Manish Dhaga, and also facilitated links between Dharminder in Dubai and Manish Dhaga. Both of them then began coordinating payments directly. That in the first week of May, Dharminder informed the petitioner Ashok Panjabi that a "9 kg token" (meaning 19,00,000) was available in Amritsar. The Petitioner Ashok Panjabi forwarded token details, currency note photograph and a phone number to Dharminder, who further transmitted the message to one Tanvir Shah in Pakistan, resulting in delivery of payment to a person named Yash in Amritsar. That the Petitioner Ashok Panjabi admitted that he, along with Manish Dhaga and Niles of Ajmer, continued the hawala operations, and through Dharminder's links had also started coordinating with Pakistani smugglers for sending narcotics money abroad. He



stated that apart from Manish Dhaga and Nilesh, no one else in India was aware of his involvement, and he was receiving heavy commission for the role played by him. That the Petitioner Ashok Panjabi further disclosed that after police arrested Yash and subsequently Laxman alias Lucky in connection with the Amritsar payment, he absconded out of fear of arrest. He conceded that he committed an offence by indulging in hawala activities and sought pardon. After completion of police remand, the present petitioner Ashok Panjabi was again produced before the jurisdictional learned Court and was sent to judicial custody. The disclosure statement/memo of the petitioner Ashok Panjabi is annexed herewith as Annexure R-1/T for kind perusal of this Hon'ble Court.

15. *That it is respectfully submitted that the mobile phone recovered from the present petitioner Ashok Panjabi and other co-accused persons were sent on 29.09.2025 to Forensic Science Laboratory, SAS Nagar for scientific examination and extraction of data from their mobile phones, which were received back with some objections. Hence, these mobile phones have again been sent to Forensic Science Laboratory, SAS Nagar after removing the objections vide Road Certificate No.423/21 dated 06.11.2025 and the report thereof is awaited.*



16. *That it is humbly submitted that the present case FIR No. 118, dated 17.06.2025 (supra) is under investigation and co-accused Jayanti Lal K Amit, Sohan Singh, Tanisha Kaur, Santokh Singh, Gulam Hassan, Karandeep Singh, Manish Dhaga and Yashu Mehta are yet to be arrested and the above said Laxman Lucky has been found to be innocent. Efforts are being made to arrest the above said remaining accused persons."*

6. Learned counsel for the petitioner submits that the averment regarding the pending arrest of co-accused Yashu Mehta is factually incorrect. He points out that the order dated 18.07.2025 (Annexure P-3) passed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge, Amritsar, clearly records that Yashu Mehta was already in custody and was thereafter ordered to be released. He further contends that present FIR pertains to the narcotic trade, however, the allegation against the petitioner at best is for having involved in some hawala transaction which has no nexus with the offence in question, hence, custodial detention of the petitioner in the instant case is not warranted.

7. I have heard the learned counsel appearing on behalf of the respective parties and have gone through the documents appended with the instant petition with their able assistance.

8. It is not disputed that the petitioner's name surfaced in the present case solely on the basis of the disclosure statement of co-accused Lakshman @ Lucky, and the only allegation attributed to him is that a sum



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of ₹9 lakh was transferred through the petitioner, at the instance of the said co-accused, in favour of Yashu Mehta. Subsequent to investigation, the prosecuting agency itself moved an application seeking discharge of both Lakshman @ Lucky and Yashu Mehta on the ground that they were not involved in the narcotics trade. In such circumstances, the allegation of routing a payment of ₹9 lakh at the behest of Lakshman @ Lucky, lacks an immediate merit in the claim of the same being an alleged drug-related activity.

9. Besides, it is also not disputed by the respondent-State that the petitioner is not involved in any other criminal case and has been in custody since 11.07.2025 and trial has yet not commenced.

10. Taking into consideration the facts as noticed above including that the petitioner's name surfaced only through the disclosure of co-accused Lakshman @ Lucky, that the sole allegation pertains to the routing of ₹9 lakh to Yashu Mehta and that both Lakshman @ Lucky and Yashu Mehta have already been discharged by the investigating agency and further bearing in mind that the conclusion of the trial is likely to take considerable time, I deem it fit to allow the instant petition.

11. Accordingly, the instant petition is allowed and the petitioner is ordered to be admitted to regular bail subject to his furnishing bail/surety bonds to the satisfaction of the trial Court/Duty Magistrate/Illaqa Magistrate concerned.

12. It is made clear that the petitioner shall not extend any threat and shall not influence any prosecution witness in any manner directly or



indirectly.

13. The observation made hereinabove shall not be construed as an expression on the merits of the case and the trial Court shall decide the case on the basis of available material.

(VINOD S. BHARDWAJ)
JUDGE

13.11.2025
Mangal Singh

Whether speaking/reasoned : Yes/No
Whether reportable : Yes/No