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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

+ **W.P.(C) 12862/2023, CM APPL. 50673/2023 & CM APPL. 27411/2024**

RITWICK DUTTA

.....Petitioner

Through: Mr. Trideep Pais, Sr. Advocate with
Mr. Abishek Jebaraj, Ms. A Reyna
Shruti, Ms. Saloni Ambastha, Ms.
Sakshi Jain, Ms. S. Abinaya, Advs.

versus

UNION OF INDIA AND ORS.

.....Respondents

Through: Mr. Vikrant N Goyal, Mr. Kunal
Dixit, Advs. for UoI.
Mr. Ripu Daman Bhardwaj, SPP for
CBI.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PURUSHAINDR KUMAR KAURAV

ORDER

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02.02.2026

1. The petition is for the quashment of the Look Out Circular ['LOC'] issued against the petitioner.
2. As per the case set up by the petitioner, he is an advocate and has undertaken multiple activities with regard to the protection of the environment. He also claims to be an office-bearer at the Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment- Trust (LIFE Trust) and that he is known for his professional work, leading to his serving as a resource person for various legal and academic institutions in India and across the world.
3. On 19.04.2023, F.I.R bearing no. RC2202023E0013 was registered



against the petitioner and the LIFE Trust under Section 35 read with Sections 7, 8, 12(4)(vi), 37, and 39 of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010. In pursuance of the same, the petitioner as well as other officials at LIFE Trust were also summoned as witnesses and investigated for close to two weeks.

4. Thereafter, the respondents, in WP (C) 12158/2023, disclosed to the petitioner that an LOC had been issued against him. This petition has been filed in order to set aside the said LOC.

5. Mr. Trideep Pais, learned senior counsel for the petitioner, submits that the petitioner has been fully cooperating with the investigating agency-respondent no. 2 and there is no instance where he has avoided the investigation in any manner whatsoever. It is submitted that either the petitioner or his representative have appeared before the concerned officers of respondent no. 2, namely, Inspector Manoj Kumar and ASP K.L. Moses on various dates. He furnishes a table listing the dates on which the petitioner has appeared before the concerned officers for investigation, and the same is extracted below, for reference:

S.no.	Inspector Manoj Kumar	ASP K.L. Moses
1.	04.04.2024	19.05.2023
2.	05.04.2024	22.05.2023
3.	08.04.2024	23.05.2023
4.	09.04.2024	24.05.2023
5.	10.04.2024	25.05.2023
6.	12.04.2024	26.05.2023
7.	15.04.2024	29.05.2023
8.	16.04.2024	30.05.2023
9.	17.04.2024	31.05.2023
10.	18.04.2024	01.06.2023
11.	19.04.2024	05.06.2023
12.	21.04.2024	03.07.2023
13.	23.04.2024	04.07.2023
14.	24.04.2024	05.07.2023



15.	29.04.2024	07.07.2023
16.	10.05.2024	10.07.2023
17.	25.05.2024	11.07.2023
18.	26.05.2024	12.07.2023
19.	30.05.2024	—
20.	31.05.2024	—
21.	01.06.2024	—
22.	04.06.2024	—
23.	05.06.2024	—
24.	07.06.2024	—
25.	29.10.2024	—
26.	20.11.2024	—

6. Further, he submits that the financial manager and accounts assistant of LIFE Trust have also appeared before the investigating agency on 44 occasions. He further submits that on twelve occasions, the petitioner has been allowed to travel abroad. The full details of the application, date of order, country to which he travelled and the date of travel etc. as furnished on behalf of the petitioner, are extracted as under:

S. No.	Application No	Order Date	Country / Place	Dates of Travel
1	CM Appl. No. 58967/2023	10.11.2023	Geneva, Switzerland	23.11.2023 - 25.11.2023
			Bonn, Germany	03.12.2023 - 08.12.2023
2	CM Appl. No. 9003/2024	14.02.2024	Oregon, USA	24.02.2024 - 04.03.2024
3	CM Appl. No. 27411/2024	10.05.2024	Italy	24.05.2024 - 30.06.2024
			Thailand and Vietnam	03.06.2024 - 20.06.2024
4	CM Appl. No. 55320/2024	20.09.2024	Lisbon, Portugal	06.10.2024 - 13.10.2024
			Cebu, Philippines	21.10.2024 - 28.10.2024
5	CM Appl. No. 66290/2024	13.11.2024	Busan, Republic of Korea	23.11.2024 - 01.12.2024
			Paris, France	14.12.2024 - 25.12.2024
6	CM Appl. No. 23168/2025	22.04.2025	Manila, Philippines	26.04.2025 - 30.04.2025



7	CM Appl. No. 28868/2025	13.05.2025	Paris and London	18.05.2025 - 26.05.2025
			Singapore	29.05.2025 - 01.06.2025
			Egypt	02.06.2025 - 10.06.2025
8	CM Appl. No. 31871/2025	22.05.2025	Morocco	03.06.2025 - 11.06.2025
			Austria and Poland	15.06.2025 - 28.06.2025
9	CM Appl. No. 43030/2025	22.07.2025	Geneva, Switzerland	06.08.2025 - 13.08.2025
10	CM Appl. No. 58601/2025	16.07.2025	Manila, Philippines	27.09.2025 - 01.10.2025
			Hanoi, Vietnam	07.10.2025 - 12.10.2025
			Cebu, Philippines	20.10.2025 - 26.10.2025
11	CM Appl. No. 67943/2025	31.10.2025	Rome, Italy	11.11.2025 - 13.11.2025
			Paris, France	13.11.2025 - 20.11.2025
12	CM Appl. No. 2400/2026	14.01.2026	Amsterdam, Netherlands	27.01.2026 - 04.02.2026

7. It is also stated that, on all occasions, upon returning from the concerned countries, the petitioner has reported to the authorities and has complied with all conditions imposed on him. The aforesaid position, as of now, remains undisputed.

8. Mr. Ripu Daman Bhardwaj, learned counsel appearing for the CBI contends that a supplementary chargesheet against the petitioner has been presented before the CMM, Rouse Avenue Courts. The cognizance of the said chargesheet, however, has not yet been taken.

9. This Court in the case of **Sumer Singh Salkan v. Asst. Director and Ors.**¹ has held that recourse to LOC can be taken in cases involving

¹ ILD (2010) VI Delhi 706



cognizable offences, if the accused was deliberately evading non-bailable warrants and other coercive measures and there is likelihood of the accused leaving the country to evade trial/arrest.

10. Again, this Court in the case of **Anant Raj Kanoria v. Union of India**,² was faced with almost similar facts and has held, therein, that the continued restraint imposed upon the subject of the LOC operates as an unwarranted restriction on his right to personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. The mechanical continuation of the LOC, despite the absence of necessity for the same, renders the restraint *prima facie* arbitrary, particularly when the petitioner has neither evaded the process of law nor shown any inclination to obstruct the investigation.

11. In the instant case, as per the CBI, chargesheet has been filed. The investigation seems to have been completed. Even otherwise, the petitioner undertakes that he will fully cooperate with the investigating agency.

12. Having considered the aforesaid facts and circumstances, and the time which has elapsed since the opening of the LOC, the Court finds that the purpose of the LOC has been served. Therefore, the LOC in question stands quashed with the following conditions:

- i. The petitioner to submit an undertaking on an affidavit before the CBI affirming that he shall continue to cooperate in the further investigation, if any, and shall appear before the investigating agency as and when required.
- ii. He shall produce all material documents requested from him by the investigating agency as may be available within his power/possession.
- iii. Henceforth, he shall furnish a full itinerary before the investigating



agency seven days before undertaking any journey abroad.

- iv. If the cognizance is taken, compliance of condition (iii) will have to take place before the concerned Court instead of the investigating agency.
 - v. In case, the investigating agency or the concerned Court has any reservation about the petitioner's travel, they shall be entitled either to restrain him or to direct for issuance of fresh LOC.
13. With the aforesaid directions, petition along with pending applications stands disposed of.
14. The property papers or the security etc., which the petitioner was required to deposit before this Court be returned/refunded on retaining a photocopy thereof.
15. List before the Joint Registrar for compliance on 23.02.2026.

PURUSHAINDR KUMAR KAURAV, J

FEBRUARY 2, 2026/p/amg

² Order dated 09.01.2026 in W.P. (C) 3313/2023