

IN THE HIGH COURT OF SINDH, CIRCUIT COURT, HYDERABAD

Cr. Bail Appln. No. D-126 of 2025

Before:

Mr. Justice Amjad Ali Bohio, J.

Mr. Justice Jawad Akbar Sarwana, J.

Applicant : Akram Ali son of Shamsuddin Jamali,
Through Mr. Tanveer Ahmed Daudani, Advocate

The State : Through Altaf Hussain Khokhar, Deputy P.G

Date of Hearing : 31.12.2025

Date of Order : 31.12.2025

ORDER

AMJAD ALI BOHIO, J: Applicant/accused Akram Ali seeks post-arrest bail in a case bearing crime No.52/2025, for offences punishable under Section 9(i),(3), (C) of C.N.S. Act, 2022 registered at P.S. Saeedabad New. Earlier his bail plea was declined by the Court of Additional Sessions Judge/Special Judge for C.N.S., Matiari vide order dated 01.09.2025.

2. As per prosecution case the applicant was apprehended by police party headed by SIP Shahzad Rahu on 08.05.2025 at Shahpanjo stand, Mehran Highway at 1500 hours and a plastic shopper containing four small and big pieces of charas weighing 1030 grams were recovered in presence of mashirs PC Moula Bux and PC Obedullah. Subsequently, aforementioned FIR was registered.

3. Learned counsel for the applicant argued that the alleged narcotic substance was foisted upon the applicant with malafide intention and ulterior motives; that the recovery proceedings were defective being in absence of independent private witnesses from

the general public; that the associated mashirs to the arrest and recovery were police officials and subordinates of the complainant; that the deliberate omission to associate independent witnesses creates serious doubt regarding the genuineness, credibility and truthfulness of the prosecution story; that the case against the applicant requires further inquiry, thereby he is entitled for the concession of bail; that the applicant is in custody since his arrest, who cannot be detained for an indefinite period as there is no likelihood of commencement of trial in near future; that the applicant has already been remanded in judicial custody, thereby he is no more required for the purpose of further investigation; that there is no legitimate apprehension or credible basis to believe that the applicant would abscond during trial; that there are no reasonable grounds or apprehension that the applicant would temper with evidence or intimidate the witnesses. In support of his contention learned counsel for the applicant has referred the order passed in Criminal Petition No.150-K/2024 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of Pakistan.

4. The learned Deputy Prosecutor General Mr. Altaf Hussain Khokhar, advanced forceful and comprehensive arguments in opposition to the bail application on behalf of State. He has submitted that the charas already recovered from the applicant represents a massive and staggering volume that unequivocally situates this case within the most serious category of narcotic offences. He emphasized that the applicant has failed to substantiate an credible claim of malafide or enmity on the part of the police officials. Learned D.P.G. further argued that no allegations of false implication and vendetta- motivated prosecution, the applicant urged. He further argued that the section 17(2) of C.N.S. Act could be determined at the time of evidence during trial. Section 20 of C.N.S. Act exclude the application of

section 103 Cr.P.C. and he lastly prayed that the bail may be dismissed.

5. We have heard learned counsel for both parties and perused the material available on record.

6. One of the most significant lacunae in the present case is the complete absence of video recording of the alleged recovery proceedings. In the modern age of technology where mobile phones equipped with video recording facilities are ubiquitously available and are routinely carried by police officials during their duties, the failure to make video recording of recovery of such a substantial quantity of contraband substance is not only inexplicable but raises serious doubts about the veracity of the prosecution story. The importance of video recording in narcotic cases has been repeatedly emphasized by the superior courts of this country. The ratio decidendi in various judgments has established that video recording serves multiple purposes: (i) it ensures transparency in the recovery proceedings; (ii) it provides independent and irrefutable evidence of the circumstances of recovery; (iii) it protects innocent persons from being falsely implicated; (iv) it safeguards the police officials from false allegations of planting evidence; and (v) it preserves the chain of custody of the recovered material.

7. In the instant case, no explanation whatsoever has been offered by the investigating agency for their failure to conduct video recording despite the fact that the alleged incident occurred at evening time at 1500 hours, providing ample time and opportunity for such recording. The prosecution has remained silent on this critical aspect. This omission, in the considered opinion of this Court, is a serious procedural irregularity that materially affects the credibility of the prosecution case.

8. The second cardinal infirmity in prosecution case pertains to the delay of four days in sending the sample and so also safe custody and safe transmission of the parcel for chemical examination. It is admitted that the FIR was registered on 08.05.2025 whereas the sample parcel was dispatched vide memorandum No.52/025 dated 12.05.2025 through PC Zulfiqar Ali thereby the delay of four days has not been explained and the net weight of the contraband charas at the time of delivery of parcel to the chemical examiner was 1026 grams, about four grams less than the net weight of contraband charas found at the time of its recovery being 1030 grams, for which, learned Deputy Prosecutor General failed to explain about safe custody of sealed sample during aforementioned period which creates serious doubt regarding the chemical report, thereby the applicant has made out his case for further inquiry.

9. The object and rationale behind this mandatory time limit is to ensure: (i) preservation of the integrity of the sample; (ii) maintenance of unbroken chain of custody; (iii) prevention of tampering or substitution; and (iv) expeditious scientific verification of the nature of the recovered substance.

10. Moreover, when the total quantity is not so huge or unmanageable that its complete transmission to the laboratory was impossible, and yet only an insignificant fraction was sent, an adverse inference must necessarily be drawn against the prosecution. This selective and partial transmission, without any reasonable justification, gives rise to a strong suspicion of manipulation and exaggeration of the quantity.

11. Another serious infirmity in the prosecution case is the complete absence of independent witnesses from the locality. The admitted position is that:

- (i) *The alleged incident occurred at 1500 hours in broad daylight*
- (ii) *The place of incident is at Shahpanjo stand Mehran Highway, which is a public road*
- (iii) *The area is not described as desolate or uninhabited*
- (iv) *Recovery of 1030 grams of contraband is claimed to have been made*

12. Despite these circumstances, no independent witness from the locality has been associated with the recovery proceedings. All the witnesses cited by the prosecution are the subordinate staff of the complainant SIP Shahzado Raho, namely PC Obedullah, PC Moula Buxand DPC Raza Muhammad. These witnesses are highly interested witnesses being the subordinates of the complainant and working under his command and supervision. Section 103 Cr.P.C. mandates that searches shall be made in the presence of two or more respectable inhabitants of the locality in which the place to be searched is situated. The object of this provision is to ensure transparency and to provide independent corroboration to the prosecution story. The learned APG has contended that Section 25 of the CNS Act, 1997 excludes the requirement of associating witnesses from the public in cases relating to narcotics. While it is true that Section 25 provides certain exclusions, the same cannot be invoked arbitrarily and mechanically in every case to justify complete non-compliance with Section 103 Cr.P.C. The prosecution must demonstrate circumstances which made it difficult or impossible to associate independent witnesses. In the instant case, when the recovery was allegedly made in broad daylight on a public road, there is no justification for non-association of independent witnesses. The absence of independent witnesses, when considered along with the other irregularities discussed above, further weakens the prosecution case.

13. Moving ahead, the legislative intent embedded within the SCNS Act, 2024 (as amended in 2025), particularly sections 16, 17, 17(2), 35(1) and 35(2) holds proprietary. This is not a mere procedural formality but a substantive obligation designed to ensure, transparency in police conduct; accountability to law; evidentiary integrity and reliability; prevention of false implications and police abuse and advancement of the rule of law. A watershed amendment to the SCNS Act, introduced in 2025, has fundamentally altered the legal landscape governing bail in narcotics cases. Section 35(1), in its original form, provided an absolute interdiction on bail, stipulating that: *"Notwithstanding anything contained in sections 496 and 497 of the Code, the bail shall not be granted to an accused person charged with an offence under this Act"*. However, Section 35(2) (as amended in 2025) now provides a critical exception, thereby restoring judicial discretion and constitutional safeguards. Section 35(2) provides that *"If it appears to the Special Court or competent court at any stage of the investigation, inquiry or trial, as the case may be, that the accused is arrested under this Act, but there are sufficient grounds for further inquiry into his being guilty, the accused shall, pending such inquiry, be released on bail with sureties..."*. The phrase *"sufficient grounds for further inquiry"* does not require the Court to reach a conclusion that guilt is improbable or that acquittal is likely. Rather, it directs the Court to examine whether the prosecution case, as presently constituted and investigated, exhibits deficiencies or lacunae that necessitate deeper investigation, cross-examination, and trial court scrutiny. Non-compliance with mandatory statutory provisions, such as the video recording requirement under Section 17(2), constitutes a material ground for *"further inquiry"* because such non-compliance, which undermines the reliability and credibility of the prosecution version; prevents verification of the police account through

objective means; raises questions about whether the statutory safeguards were deliberately circumvented and creates a foundation for reasonable doubt regarding the veracity of the alleged recovery.

14. The Honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan in the landmarks judgments of *Zahid Sarfaraz Gill v. The State* [2024 SCMR 934] and *Muhammad Abid Hussain v. The State* [2025 SCMR 721] have collectively establish that procedural fairness, technological evidence collection, and constitutional protections form the foundational pillars upon which narcotics prosecutions must rest, ensuring that neither the innocent are wrongfully convicted nor the guilty escape accountability through shoddy investigation.

15. For the foregoing reasons, we are / were of the considered opinion that the applicant is / was entitled to bail. Accordingly, the bail application in hand is / was allowed and the applicant was admitted to bail, subject to furnishing solvent surety in the sum of Rs.100,000/= (Rupees one hundred thousand only) and P.R. bond in the like amount to the satisfaction of the trial Court vide short order dated 31.12.2025.

16. Needless to mention that the above assessments are tentative nature and shall not affect the merits of the case during trial.

17. Above are the reasons of short order dated 31.12.2025.


JUDGE


JUDGE

Ahmed/Pa,