

Supreme Court of India

Sk. Alek Mohammad vs The State Of West Bengal on 19 February, 1974

Equivalent citations: 1974 CriLJ 747, (1974) 4 SCC 599, 1974 (6) UJ 247 SC

Bench: D Palekar, P Bhagwati, V K Iyer

JUDGMENT Krishna Iyer J

1. We recorded a short order releasing the petitioner in this petition for habeas corpus and we now proceed to give our reasons.

2. The petitioner was detained by the District Magistrate of Howrah by order dated August 8, 1972. The ground on which the District Magistrate was satisfied about the prejudicial activities of the petitioner was communicated immediately after the detention was effected on August 21, 1972. The only particular instance communicated to the petitioner was that on January 14, 1972 he and his associates were engaged in committing theft of telephone cable wires belonging to the P & T Department at Balarampri and that he was caught red-handed. "In consequence of your said activity which attracts Clause (iii) of Section 3(1)(a) of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971, the tele-communication system was disturbed." This was the sole ground on which the petitioner could possibly make a representation. However, the District Magistrate, in his affidavit in opposition, stated "that the detenu petitioner is one of the notorious stealer of railway materials and cable wire." Thereafter, the particular instance of January 14, 1972 is also set out. The District Magistrate winds up by stating that "the aforesaid activity of the petitioner disturbed tele-communication system and also caused substantial loss and damages to the Post and Telegraph Department and so he was detained under the said Act."

(emphasis supplied)

3. It is obvious that the District Magistrate has admitted to having been influenced by the a course of activities as distinguished from a single act or episode and by the notoriety of the petitioner as a stealer of railway materials and cable wire. This important and injurious information was not communicated to the petitioner and, therefore, could not have been the subject of any effective representation contra by the latter. Therefore, the case is attracted by the *retie* in the judgment in *Shaik Hanif v. State of West Bengal*. (1) The petitioner is therefore entitled to be release, and the habeas corpus application is accordingly allowed.