CNR No: PHHC010833052026
2026:PHHC:120027

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-27797-2026

Satpal Singh .... Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab ....Respondent

Date of Decision: August 26, 2026
Date of Uploading: August 26, 2026

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SUMEET GOEL

Present: Mr. S.S. Sarwara, Advocate for the petitioner(s).

Mr. Jaypreet Singh, DAG, Punjab.

Mr. P.S. Bhandari, Advocate , for the complainant.

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SUMEET GOEL, J. (Oral)

1. Present petition has been filed under Section 482 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (hereinafter to be referred as 'the BNSS') for grant of pre-arrest/anticipatory bail to the petitioner, in case bearing FIR No. 156 dated 30.06.2025 registered for the offences punishable under Sections 420, 406 of the IPC (now Sections 318(4), 316 of the BNS, 2023) and Section 13 of the Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012, at Police Station Sadar Dhuri, District Sangrur.

2. The gravamen of the allegations against the petitioner and his co-accused is that they had cheated the complainant for ₹5,80,000/- which was allegedly taken on the pretext of sending her to Canada. However, neither the complainant was sent to Canada nor was the entire alleged amount returned to her. Thus, according to the allegations, the petitioner and his co-accused failed to fulfill their promise of sending the complainant abroad and also failed to return the amount in question. Upon these set of allegations, the present FIR came to be registered against accused persons.

3. Learned counsel for the petitioner has contended that a bare perusal of the FIR itself reveals that the allegations levelled against the petitioner are concocted, improbable and devoid of merit. It is further submitted that the petitioner has been falsely implicated in the present case. Learned counsel further submits that the petitioner has no role to play in the alleged offence. Learned counsel for the petitioner submits that the allegations levelled against the petitioner are false, baseless, vague and highly exaggerated, and the petitioner has been implicated only with a view to harass and pressurize him as also to give a criminal colour to a monetary dispute arising out of the alleged financial transactions. Learned counsel further submits that the entire prosecution case is based upon documentary evidence, including online bank statements, cheque transactions, Google Pay/UPI records, WhatsApp chats and inquiry proceedings, all of which are already in possession of the investigating agency & hence, custodial interrogation of the petitioner is not required. It is further contended that the essential ingredients constituting the offences under Sections 420 and 406 IPC are not *prima facie* made out against the petitioner, as no dishonest intention from the inception of the transaction can be attributed to him and, at the most, the dispute is predominantly civil and monetary in nature.

3.1. Learned counsel asserts that the custodial interrogation should not be used as a punitive measure and is justified only when absolutely necessary for the recovery of material evidence. Learned counsel has argued that nothing is to be recovered from the petitioner. Furthermore, the petitioner is ready to join the investigation and hence no useful purpose would be served by sending him behind the bars. On the aforesaid submissions, the grant of anticipatory bail is entreated for.

4. *Per contra*, learned State counsel (assisted by learned counsel for the complainant) while raising arguments in tandem with the status report dated 18.05.2026, has opposed the grant of anticipatory bail to the petitioner by arguing that the offence committed by the petitioner is serious in nature. Relevant part of the said status report reads thus:

> *"**6. Role Played by the Petitioner:-***
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> *That it is respectfully submitted that the petitioner Satpal Singh has defrauded the complainant for an amount of Rs.5,80,000/- out of which Rs. 5,50,000/- has been deposited in the account of the petitioner by the complainant as per entries which are on the record in lieu to send her abroad on LMIA. The custodial interrogation of the petitioner is needfully required for recovery of the stated amount as he has defrauded the complainant on the pretext of sending him abroad. That the account statement of the complainant showing the entries are annexed herewith as ANNEXURE R-1 for the kind perusal of the Hon'ble court."*

Learned State Counsel has submitted that the investigation revealed that the complainant paid an amount of ₹5,80,000/- lakhs to the accused persons for the purpose of sending her abroad, but the petitioner and his co-accused, instead cheated the complainant. Learned State counsel has further submitted that the petitioner has assured the complainant that he would take responsibility of her money. According to learned State counsel, the offence committed by the petitioner caused substantial financial and emotional distress to the victim. Considering the seriousness of the allegations, custodial interrogation of the petitioner is necessary to unearth the broader conspiracy, identify co-accused and recover the ill-gotten money. Given the severity of the offence, there exists a substantial likelihood that the petitioner may abscond or tamper with the evidence, if he is enlarged on bail. On the strength of these submissions, dismissal of the petition in hand is entreated for.

5. I have heard the learned counsel for the rival parties and have gone through the available record of the case.

6. From the material available on record, it transpires that the allegations levelled against the petitioner are grave and specific. The petitioner has been specifically named in the FIR in question. The investigation revealed that the petitioner and his co-accused cheated the complainant for ₹5,80,000/- on the pretext of sending her abroad, but neither the petitioner and his co-accused honored their promise nor had returned the money in question.

6.1. The offence in question does not merely involve financial deceit but strikes at the very fabric of social trust, involving elements of human trafficking and cross-border immigration fraud, which are not only grave in nature but also have far-reaching consequences on public order. Cases of this nature, where vulnerable individuals are lured with false promises of lawful migration and are subsequently subjected to exploitation, fall within the ambit of organized human trafficking and merit strict judicial scrutiny and deterrence. Human trafficking under the garb of immigration consultancy is a growing menace which preys upon the desperation and dreams of unsuspecting citizens. The Courts must remain vigilant and ensure that such rackets are not emboldened by leniency at the pre-trial stage. The fraudulent inducement for illegal migration, followed by subjecting individuals to inhumane and life-threatening conditions, not only reflects criminal intent but also constitutes a serious affront to human dignity and national interest. The Court cannot overlook the broader public interest involved in cases of immigration fraud, especially when they border on transnational human trafficking. Such offences necessitate a strong and principled judicial response to prevent their recurrence.

6.2. Such offences strike at the core of public trust and reflect a disturbing trend prevalent in this region, where unscrupulous individuals posing as travel facilitators exploit the aspirations of innocent citizens seeking opportunities abroad. These fraudulent activities not only cause severe financial and emotional distress but also undermine the integrity of lawful immigration systems. Therefore, individuals involved in such organized deceit must be dealt with firmly and in accordance with the law, leaving no room for leniency.

6.3. Furthermore, the investigating agency has sought the custodial interrogation of the petitioner for effective recovery, verification of facts, and to establish the broader conspiracy, if any, behind the occurrence. No cause *nay* plausible cause has been shown, at this stage, from which it can be deciphered that the petitioner has been falsely implicated into the present FIR. It goes without saying that in the instant case, the complainant has categorically stated that the petitioner and his co-accused had defrauded the complainant of a substantial amount under the false pretext of facilitating legal migration of her abroad, which caused severe financial and emotional distress.

7. It is befitting to mention here that while considering a plea for grant of anticipatory bail, the Court has to equilibrate between safeguarding individual rights and protecting societal interests. The Court ought to reckon with the magnitude and nature of the offence; the role attributed to the accused; the need for fair and free investigation as also the deeper and wide impact of such alleged iniquities on the society. It is imperative that every person in the Society can expect an atmosphere free from foreboding & fear of any transgression. At this stage, there is no material on record to hold that prima facie case is not made out against the petitioner. The material which

has come on record and preliminary investigation, appears to establish a reasonable basis for the accusations. Thus, it is not appropriate to grant anticipatory bail to the petitioner, as it would necessarily cause impediment in effective investigation. In ***State v. Anil Sharma, (1997) 7 SCC 187***, the Supreme Court held as under : (SCC p. 189, para 6)

> "*6. We find force in the submission of CBI that custodial interrogation is qualitatively more elicitation-oriented than questioning a suspect who is well-ensconced with a favourable order under Section 438 of the Code. In a case like this, effective interrogation of a suspected person is of tremendous advantage in disinterring many useful informations and also materials which would have been concealed. Success in such interrogation would elude if the suspected person knows that he is well protected and insulated by a pre-arrest bail order during the time he is interrogated. Very often interrogation in such a condition would reduce to a mere ritual. The argument that the custodial interrogation is fraught with the danger of the person being subjected to third-degree methods need not be countenanced, for, such an argument can be advanced by all accused in all criminal cases. The Court has to presume that responsible police officers would conduct themselves in a responsible manner and that those entrusted with the task of disinterring offences would not conduct themselves as offenders.*"

8. In view of the seriousness of the allegations, this Court finds no compelling ground to extend the benefit of discretionary relief to the petitioner. Moreover, custodial interrogation of the petitioner is necessary for an effective investigation & to unravel the truth. The petition is, thus, devoid of merits and is hereby **dismissed**.

9. Nothing said hereinabove shall be deemed to be an expression of opinion upon merits of the case/investigation.

10. Pending application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed off.

(SUMEET GOEL)
JUDGE

August 26, 2026
Naveen

Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes/No

Whether reportable: Yes/No