

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION**

Anticipatory Bail Application No.3386 of 2024

Raghvendran Manjunath Chandan
Aged about -42 yrs, Occu- Businessman
R/at-Flat No.306,
Gokul Puram Apartment,
Khadegolovoli, Near water tank,
Vithalwadi, Kalyan (E), Dist-Thane ... Applicant.

Vs.

The State of Maharashtra
(Central Police Station,
Ulhasnagar, Thane.) ... Respondent.

Mr Piyush Chhabria for the applicant.
Mr Yogesh Dabke, APP for respondent/State.
PI Umesh Sawant Central Police Station.

**Coram : R.N.Laddha, J.
Date : 12 December 2024.**

P.C. :

The applicant is apprehending his arrest in connection with CR No.1166 of 2024, registered with Central Police Station, Thane, accusing him of committing the offence punishable under Sections 143(1), 143(2), 143(3) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Prevention of Immoral Trafficking Act, 1956 (for short the 'PITA').

2. It is the case of the prosecution that, based on secret information about women being coerced into sex trade for financial gain, a raid was conducted at the Supphire-Inn lodge. During this time, the applicant was managing the lodge under a leave and license agreement. During the raid 14 victims were found engaged in prostitution along with customers, and co-accused Santosh and Shivkant were apprehended.

3. Mr Piyush Chhabria, the learned Counsel for the applicant, asserts the applicant's innocence and submits that the applicant has been falsely implicated in the present crime. The applicant is not named in the FIR. The learned Counsel submits that the applicant did not receive payments from any of the victims, and the victims never made any allegations against the applicant. All the alleged victims were adults aware of the situation, and there are no allegations of the applicant coercing any one into illegal activities. According to the learned Counsel, the applicant has been unfairly made a scapegoat, and custodial interrogation is unnecessary since nothing is to be recovered from the applicant.

4. On the other hand, Mr Yogesh Dabke, the learned APP, representing respondent/State opposes the application, arguing that the applicant's execution of the leave and license agreement demonstrates his awareness of the activities within the lodge. The offence is of a serious nature. The learned APP, however, acknowledges that the investigation is almost complete and nothing is to be recovered from the applicant.

5. Upon perusing the records, it appears that the documents related to the crime, including the leave and license agreement, are already in the custody of the investigating agency. There is nothing on record to indicate the applicant's presence at the time of the raid. *Prima facie*, there is no material suggesting that the applicant was aware of the alleged prostitution business conducted in the lodge. Moreover, the investigation is almost complete and nothing is to be recovered from the applicant. There appears no need for custodial interrogation of the applicant. In light of the above, this Court is inclined to allow the present application. Hence, the following order :

Order

(i) In the event of the applicant's arrest in connection with CR No.1166 of 2024, registered with Central Police Station, Thane, he shall be released on bail upon executing a PR Bond of Rs.25,000/- and furnishing one or more sureties in the like amount.

(ii) The applicant shall attend the concerned Police Station as and when required.

(iii) The applicant, himself or through any other person, shall not tamper with the evidence or influence the witnesses.

6. The application stands disposed of accordingly.

[R. N. Laddha,J.]