

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

Anticipatory Bail Application No. 1836 of 2025

Swapnil Harish Natekar

Aged 38 years, Occ. Business,

R/at Sunetra Colony, Near

R. R. College, Tal- Jath,

Dist. Sangli – 416 404.

... Applicant

versus

The State of Maharashtra

(At the instance of Jat Police Station

vide their C.R. No.370 of 2025)

...Respondent

Mr Prabhanjay R Dave a/w Mr Pradeep P Kumawat, for the Applicant.

Mr Pankaj Deokar, APP, for Respondent / State.

Coram: R.N. Laddha, J.

Date: 7 July 2025

P.C.:

1. By this application, the applicant seeks pre-arrest bail in connection with CR No.370 of 2025, registered at Jath Police Station, Sangli, for offences punishable under Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, and Section 143 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

2. It is the case of the prosecution that, based on secret

information about women being coerced into the sex trade for financial gain, a raid was conducted at the Shramvisava Lodge. During the raid, four victims were found engaged in prostitution. At that time, the applicant was the owner of the premises.

3. Mr Prabhanjay Dave, the learned Counsel appearing on behalf of the applicant, asserts the applicant's innocence and submits that the applicant has been falsely implicated in the present crime. Drawing the attention of this Court to the leave and licence agreement, the learned Counsel submits that the applicant gave the premises under a leave and licence agreement to the co-accused, Akash Dodhmani. 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 anyone into the alleged illegal activities. According to the learned Counsel, the applicant has been unfairly made a scapegoat. In these circumstances, the custodial interrogation of the applicant is unwarranted since nothing is to be recovered from the applicant.

4. Mr Pankaj Deokar, the learned Additional Public

Prosecutor representing the respondent/ State, opposes the request for pre-arrest bail and contends that the offence is of a grave and serious nature. The victims were found at the scene while committing illegal activities on the premises, of which the applicant is the owner.

5. This Court has given anxious consideration to the rival submissions canvassed across the Bar and perused the material on record.

6. Upon perusing the records, it appears that the applicant entered into a leave and license agreement with the co-accused, Akash Dodhmani. There is nothing on record to suggest that the applicant was aware of the alleged illegal activities taking place on the premises or that he coerced the victims into the alleged illicit activities. Furthermore, the applicant was not present during the raid, and all victims are of legal age. The investigation is at an advanced stage. The prosecution's apprehension about evidence tampering and witness influence can be addressed by imposing appropriate conditions. In the circumstances, this Court is inclined to exercise its discretion in favour of the applicant. Hence, the following order:

ORDER

(i) In the event of the applicant's arrest

in connection with CR No.370 of 2025, registered at Jath Police Station, Sangli, 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 witnesses.

7. The application stands disposed of accordingly.

(R.N. Laddha, J.)