**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

CRM-M-36973-2025 (O&M)
Date of decision: 15th July, 2025

Neeraj Kumar Singhal

… Petitioner

Versus

Central Bureau of Investigation

… Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANJARI NEHRU KAUL

Present: Mr. Shreenath A. Khemka, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr. Ravi Kamal Gupta, Spl. Public Prosecutor, CBI.

Mr. Preetinder S. Ahluwalia and Mr. Keerat Dhillon, Advocates for the complainant.

MANJARI NEHRU KAUL, J.

1. The petitioner is seeking the concession of anticipatory bail in case FIR Nos.RC0512023S0012 (Annexure P-13) and RC0512023S0013 (Annexure P-14) dated 15.11.2023 under Sections 120B, 452, 323, 506, 427, 148, 149, 420, 465, 467, 468, 471 of IPC (Section 465 IPC deleted and Sections 408 & 193 IPC added later on) registered at Police Station CBI, SCB Chandigarh, relating to serious allegations of conspiracy and falsification of official records in order to facilitate illegal acquisition of a substantial parcel of prime land belonging to the complainant, Guru Nanak Vidya Bhandar Trust (hereinafter referred to as, 'the Trust').

2. Learned counsel for the petitioner has strenuously contended that the petitioner has been falsely implicated and is not even named in

the FIRs (Annexure P-13 and 14). It is submitted that there is no specific or prima facie material to suggest the involvement of the petitioner in the alleged conspiracy to usurp the land of the Trust. The allegations, it is claimed, have been engineered against the petitioner solely on account of his role as a bank official performing routine official duties.

3. While drawing the attention of this Court to the summoning orders (Annexures P-1 & P-2), learned counsel has argued that the foundation of the case against the petitioner lies in a statement given by him before the learned trial Court in an unrelated matter titled *'Kavita vs. Mamta'*, wherein he deposed on behalf of UCO Bank. It has been submitted that the petitioner appeared and testified in response to summons issued by a Court at Bhatinda, on 11.05.2022 and 29.11.2022. As per instructions received from his superior officers, specifically Lokesh Aggarwal, the Assistant General Manager and Deputy Zonal Head, the petitioner was deputed to produce documents and provide testimony.

4. Learned counsel has further argued that the petitioner, as then Branch Manager of UCO bank, Cannaught Place, New Delhi, acted purely in an official capacity. His testimony dated 16.05.2022 (Annexure P-3), alleged to be false, is claimed to be based on official records of the bank. In support, learned counsel has relied upon Annexure P-7, which purportedly corroborates his deposition with internal documentation.

5. It has still further been contended that the petitioner has been selectively targeted by the prosecution, while similarly placed individuals, such as one Mr.Swapnil Mishra, also a Branch Manager of the bank, who allegedly deposed against the same complainant-Trust in

another case (Annexure P-10), have not been arrayed as accused, thereby rendering the prosecution discriminatory and mala fide.

6. With reference to Annexure P-5, learned counsel has submitted that representation dated 27.10.2022 was received by the petitioner from the complainant-Trust, disputing the date of account opening reflected in the electronic system of the bank (Finacle), which stated it to be 22.03.1990, whereas the complainant claimed the account was opened in 1977. Learned counsel has submitted that the petitioner diligently forwarded this issue to the Chief Manager, noting that older records of the branch were unavailable due to shredding or loss. Subsequently, a Civil Court granted an interim injunction (Annexure P-6) dated 15.10.2022, restraining the bank from altering the said date, which, as per the learned counsel for the petitioner, demonstrates his bona fides and careful compliance with legal obligations.

7. It has still further been submitted that the issuance of non-bailable warrants (vide zimni orders dated 10.06.2025, Annexure P-21) was due to a mistaken address, as the petitioner resides in Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh), not Shimla, where the warrants were sought to be executed. Thus, the petitioner was unaware of the proceedings.

8. Finally, it has been argued by the learned counsel that the investigation is complete, the charge-sheet has been filed, and nothing remains to be recovered from the petitioner. Therefore, it is prayed that the petitioner be granted the concession of anticipatory bail.

9. On being put to notice, Mr. Ravi Kamal Gupta, Spl. Public Prosecutor, CBI has put in an appearance along with Mr. Preetinder Singh Ahluwalia and Mr. Keerat Dhillon, Advocates on behalf of the complainant.

10. Per contra, learned Special Public Prosecutor for the CBI, assisted by learned counsel for the complainant, has vehemently opposed the prayer and submissions made by the counsel opposite. They have asserted that the allegations against the petitioner are not only grave but also specific and supported by documentary evidence.

11. It has been still further submitted that the petitioner, in conspiracy with the prime accused, Vikas Kumar, Advocate, and others, played a crucial role in legitimizing forged records relating to the bank account of the Trust. By misusing his position as the Chief Branch Manager of UCO Bank, Connaught Place, the petitioner deliberately deposed before the trial Court that the bank account of the complainant-Trust commenced on 22.03.1990. In support, attention has been drawn to Annexures P-3 and P-4. This testimony, it is contended, is directly contradicted by the affidavit dated 25.03.2022, previously submitted by the petitioner himself, wherein it was acknowledged by the petitioner that the account of the Trust had been in existence since 1977.

12. It has been further submitted that the petitioner, vide certificate dated 19.10.2022, admitted that the internal records of the bank were inconsistent with the documentation provided by the complainant/Trust, and acknowledged the possibility that the correct opening date may indeed be in 1977. Despite this acknowledgement, learned Special Public Prosecutor for CBI and the counsel for the complainant have alleged that the petitioner willfully proceeded to testify falsely before the Court on 30.11.2022, thereby undermining judicial proceedings and extending undue benefit to the prime accused.

13. Reliance has also been placed by learned counsel for the complainant to the statement of Mr. Lokesh Aggarwal, AGM and

Deputy Zonal Head (Annexure P-16), wherein it has been explicitly stated that the petitioner knowingly deposed falsehoods before the trial Court and that the accounts of the Trust had, in fact, been in existence since 31.03.1977. It has been asserted that the conduct of the petitioner was not merely inadvertent, but was an intentional act to aid the accused in discrediting the genuine Trust and validating forged documents.

14. Learned counsels have further emphasized that strangely the petitioner volunteered to appear in Court and testify even when not summoned in his individual capacity, indicating a deliberate and premeditated effort to influence proceedings.

15. I have heard learned counsel for the parties and perused the relevant material on record.

16. The FIR and accompanying material reveal a meticulously orchestrated conspiracy to fraudulently acquire approximately 8 acres of valuable charitable land owned by the complainant-Trust. The conspiracy allegedly involves multiple stakeholders, including legal professionals, revenue officials, bank personnel etc. The present petitioner, being a senior functionary of UCO bank, is alleged to have played a significant role in enabling the execution of this fraudulent plan.

17. The documents on record, particularly the contradictory statements and certificates issued by the petitioner himself, reveal a disturbing pattern. Despite being aware of inconsistencies in the record of the bank and the historical existence of the account of the Trust since 1977, the petitioner repeatedly chose to testify otherwise in judicial proceedings. The act of presenting false evidence before a Court,

especially by a public servant, undermines the very foundation of judicial integrity and public trust in institutions.

18. The conduct of the petitioner, as prima facie revealed from the record, cannot be dismissed lightly being an error in official duty. Rather, it appears to be an intentional and dishonest misuse of his position as the branch head of a nationalized bank. The evidence, including the affidavit, dated 25.03.2022, certificate dated 19.10.2022, and the deposition of Mr. Lokesh Aggarwal, clearly demonstrate the conscious participation of the petitioner in the alleged conspiracy.

19. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has consistently held that in cases involving economic offences, particularly those affecting public trust and involving elements of systemic fraud, Courts must adopt a cautious and stringent approach in the grant of anticipatory bail. This is more so where proceedings under Section 82 Cr.P.C./84 BNSS have been initiated, as in the present case.

20. Given the serious nature of the allegations, the gravity of the offence, the active role of the petitioner in misleading a judicial forum, and the larger public interest involved, this Court does not deem it fit to extend the extraordinary concession of anticipatory bail to the petitioner. The petition stands dismissed. However, it is made clear that anything observed hereinabove shall not be construed to be an expression of opinion on the merits of the case.

(MANJARI NEHRU KAUL)
JUDGE

July 15, 2025
rps

Whether speaking/reasoned Yes/No
Whether reportable Yes/No