IN THE HIGH COURT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH, SHIMLA.

Cr.MP(M) No.652 of 2026
Decided on: 27.04.2026

Sanjeesha Chauhan .....Petitioner

Versus

State of Himachal Pradesh .....Respondent

Coram:
Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sandeep Sharma, Judge.
Whether approved for reporting? [1]

For the Petitioner : Mr. P.P.Chauhan, Ms. Shikha Rajta & Ms. Urvashi Rajta, Advocates.

For the Respondent : Mr. Rajan Kahol & Mr. Vishal Panwar, Additional Advocates General with Mr. Ravi Chauhan & Mr. Anish Banshtu, Deputy Advocates General.

ASI Maheshwar Parsad, PS Nalagarh, District Solan, HP present in person along with record.

Sandeep Sharma, Judge (oral):

Sequel to order dated 20.04.2026, whereby petitioner was ordered to be enlarged on interim bail in FIR

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[1] *Whether the reporters of the local papers may be allowed to see the judgment?*

No.0278 dated 01.10.2023 under Sections 420, 467, 468 and 120-B of Indian Penal Code, at Police Station Nalagarh, District Baddi, H.P., respondent-State has filed status report prepared on the basis of the investigation carried out by the Investigating Agency and ASI Bharat Bhushan has come present with record.

2. Mr. Rajan Kahol, learned Additional Advocate General fairly states that pursuant to order dated 20.04.2026, bail petitioner has already joined the investigation and she is fully co-operating with the investigating agency. Mr. Kahol further contends that at this stage nothing is required to be recovered from the bail petitioner and as such, her custodial interrogation is not required and she can be ordered to be enlarged on bail subject to the condition that she shall make herself available for investigation and trial, as and when called by the Investigating Agency.

3. In view of the aforesaid fair submissions having been made by Mr. Rajan Kahol, learned Additional Advocate General, this Court sees no reason for custodial interrogation of the bail petitioner and as such, she deserves to be enlarged on bail.

4. By now it is well settled that freedom of an individual is of utmost importance and cannot be curtailed for indefinite period. Till the time guilt of accused is not proved, in accordance with law, he is deemed to be innocent. In the case at hand, the guilt, if any, of the bail petitioner is yet to be proved, in accordance with law.

5. The Hon'ble Apex Court in Criminal Appeal No.227/2018, **Dataram Singh** vs. **State of Uttar Pradesh & Anr** decided on 6.2.2018 has categorically held that freedom of an individual is of utmost importance and same cannot be curtailed merely on the basis of suspicion. Hon'ble Apex Court has further held that till the time guilt of accused is not proved, in accordance with law, he is deemed to be innocent.

The relevant paras No.2 to 5 of the judgment are reproduced as under:-

> 2. A fundamental postulate of criminal jurisprudence is the presumption of innocence, meaning thereby that a person is believed to be innocent until found guilty. However, there are instances in our criminal law where a reverse onus has been placed on an accused with regard to some specific offences but that is another matter and does not detract from the fundamental postulate in respect of other offences. Yet another important facet of our criminal jurisprudence is that the grant of bail is the general rule and putting a person in jail or in a prison or in a correction home (whichever expression one may wish to use) is an exception. Unfortunately, some of these basic principles appear to have been lost sight of with the result that more and more persons are being incarcerated and for longer periods. This does not do any good to our criminal jurisprudence or to our society.
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> 3. There is no doubt that the grant or denial of bail is entirely the discretion of the judge considering a case but even so, the exercise of judicial discretion has been circumscribed by a large number of decisions rendered by this Court and by every High Court in the country. Yet, occasionally there is a necessity to introspect whether denying bail to an accused person is the right thing to do on the facts and in the circumstances of a case.
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> 4. While so introspecting, among the factors that need to be considered is whether the accused was arrested during investigations when that person perhaps has the best opportunity to tamper with the evidence or influence witnesses. If the investigating officer does not

find it necessary to arrest an accused person during investigations, a strong case should be made out for placing that person in judicial custody after a charge sheet is filed. Similarly, it is important to ascertain whether the accused was participating in the investigations to the satisfaction of the investigating officer and was not absconding or not appearing when required by the investigating officer. Surely, if an accused is not hiding from the investigating officer or is hiding due to some genuine and expressed fear of being victimised, it would be a factor that a judge would need to consider in an appropriate case. It is also necessary for the judge to consider whether the accused is a first-time offender or has been accused of other offences and if so, the nature of such offences and his or her general conduct. The poverty or the deemed indigent status of an accused is also an extremely important factor and even Parliament has taken notice of it by incorporating an Explanation to Section 436 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. An equally soft approach to incarceration has been taken by Parliament by inserting Section 436A in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

5. To put it shortly, a humane attitude is required to be adopted by a judge, while dealing with an application for remanding a suspect or an accused person to police custody or judicial custody. There are several reasons for this including maintaining the dignity of an accused person, howsoever poor that person might be, the requirements of Article 21 of the Constitution and the fact that there is enormous overcrowding in prisons, leading to social and other problems as noticed by this Court in In Re-Inhuman Conditions in 1382 Prisons

6. Needless to say, object of the bail is to secure the attendance of the accused in the trial and the proper test to be applied in the solution of the question whether bail should be granted or refused is whether it is probable that the party will appear to take his trial. Otherwise, bail is not to be withheld as a punishment. Otherwise also, normal rule is of bail and not jail. Court has to keep in mind nature of accusations, nature of evidence in support thereof, severity of the punishment which conviction will entail, character of the accused, circumstances which are peculiar to the accused involved in that crime.

7. The Hon'ble Apex Court in ***Sanjay Chandra versus Central Bureau of Investigation*** (2012)1 Supreme Court Cases 49; held as under:-

> "The object of bail is to secure the appearance of the accused person at his trial by reasonable amount of bail. The object of bail is neither punitive nor preventative. Deprivation of liberty must be considered a punishment, unless it can be required to ensure that an accused person will stand his trial when called upon. The Courts owe more than verbal

> respect to the principle that punishment begins after conviction, and that every man is deemed to be innocent until duly tried and duly found guilty. Detention in custody pending completion of trial could be a cause of great hardship. From time to time, necessity demands that some unconvicted persons should be held in custody pending trial to secure their attendance at the trial but in such cases, "necessity" is the operative test. In India , it would be quite contrary to the concept of personal liberty enshrined in the Constitution that any person should be punished in respect of any matter, upon which, he has not been convicted or that in any circumstances, he should be deprived of his liberty upon only the belief that he will tamper with the witnesses if left at liberty, save in the most extraordinary circumstances. Apart from the question of prevention being the object of refusal of bail, one must not lose sight of the fact that any imprisonment before conviction has a substantial punitive content and it would be improper for any court to refuse bail as a mark of disapproval of former conduct whether the accused has been convicted for it or not or to refuse bail to an unconvicted person for the propose of giving him a taste of imprisonment as a lesson."

8. The Hon'ble Apex Court in ***Prasanta Kumar Sarkar v. Ashis Chatterjee and Another*** (2010) 14 SCC 496, has laid down the following principles to be kept in mind, while deciding petition for bail:

(i) whether there is any prima facie or reasonable ground to believe that the accused had committed the offence;
(ii) nature and gravity of the accusation;
(iii) severity of the punishment in the event of conviction;
(iv) danger of the accused absconding or fleeing, if released on bail;
(v) character, behaviour, means, position and standing of the accused;
(vi) likelihood of the offence being repeated;
(vii) reasonable apprehension of the witnesses being influenced; and
(viii) danger, of course, of justice being thwarted by grant of bail.

9. Consequently, in view of the above, order dated 20.04.2026 passed by this Court, is made absolute, with following conditions:-

a. she shall make herself available for the purpose of interrogation, if so required and regularly attend the trial Court on each and every date of hearing and if prevented by any reason to do so, seek exemption from appearance by filing appropriate application;

b. she shall not tamper with the prosecution evidence nor hamper the investigation of the case in any manner whatsoever;

c. she shall not make any inducement, threat or promises to any person acquainted with the facts of the case so as to dissuade her from disclosing such facts to the Court or the Police Officer; and

d. she shall not leave the territory of India without the prior permission of the Court.

10. It is clarified that if the petitioner misuses her liberty or violates any of the conditions imposed upon her, the Investigating Agency shall be free to move this Court for cancellation of the bail.

11. Any observations made hereinabove shall not be construed to be a reflection on the merits of the case and shall remain confined to the disposal of this application alone.

12. The bail petition stands disposed of accordingly. The petitioner is permitted to produce copy of order downloaded from the High Court website and the trial Court shall not insist for certified copy of the order, however, it may verify the order from the High Court website or otherwise.

April 27, 2025 **(Sandeep Sharma),**
(sunil) **Judge**