2026:PHHC:027064

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-3832-2026

Mayank Gupta

….Petitioner

versus

State of Haryana

….Respondent

Date of decision: February 19, 2026
Date of Uploading: February 23, 2026

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SUMEET GOEL

Present:- Mr. Gaurav Gupta, Advocate for the petitioner.

Ms. Priyanka Sadar Thakur, Senior DAG Haryana.

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<u>SUMEET GOEL, J. (ORAL)</u>

Present petition has been filed under Section 482 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (for short 'BNSS') on behalf of the petitioner seeking grant of anticipatory/pre-arrest bail, in case FIR No.0069 dated 19.08.2025, registered under Sections 316(2)/ 318(4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (for short 'BNS'), at Police Station Cyber Crima Ambala, District Ambala.

2. The prosecution case, in brief, is that complainant, namely, Sakshi Gupta, had made the following complaint:

> "*On dated 10.08.025, my husband on his mobile no. 72060-40235, received a WhatsApp message from an unknown mobile no. 92011-22387 at around 08:15 for a part-time job. The detail of message is as under: "Hello, 1 am Elakshi Bhatia, the person Incharge of part-time recruitment in the HR department of Bajaj Finance. We are currently expanding our*

team and would like to invite you to join us. Our part time job is simple: just give a 5-star rating to the restaurant or hotel we review. After completing each task, you will receive a bonus of Rs. 210 rupees. You can earn 4000-14000 rupees or even more per day. Are you ready to join us?" (Copy enclosed). My husband asked me about this and he told her that my wife is ready to join. The scammer has asked to complete registration by giving Name, gender, Age and Telegram App Yes or No? My husband has given my details to the scammer. Scammer has asked to download telegram app for payroll and I have downloaded the telegram app and my husband has informed her about download completion of telegram app. Scammer has given a task with Step 1 click on link https://maps.app.goo.gl/3bylekzqDG2AuURF6 Step 2 tap the review Step 3 rating 5-star Step 4 take a screen shot show her. Then it's done you will get 210rs immediately. I have completed the steps and my husband has forwarded the screenshot to the scammer. Further scammer has asked my husband to open telegram account and add the receptionist User Name @vardhika Link https://t.me/vardhika9 and asked to contact via Telegram to receive pay of 210 rupees by providing pay code(W1001). Screenshots of chattings in Whatsapp cited above are enclosed herewith and also provided in paf format through mobile. I have clicked on the Link https://t.me/vardhika9 provided by Scammer (mobile no. +91 9201122387 introduce as Elakshi Bhatia) and I have provided pay code(W1001) given by scammer to Vardhika Rawat by matching User Name @vardhika9. Vardhika Rawat has stated me in telegram that she is my receptionist and ask me she will arrange a job for me and asked to receive a job salary of 210 Rs.? She has verified successfully code (W1001) provided by the scammer. She has registered me as a part time employee with them by taking my details. My account details were submitted to their financial department. My account no.3290000102058163 was credited with Rs. 210/- on 10-08-2025 at 09:03 AM. Vardhika Rawat has provided Task Rule Channel Guide (2).txt which is as under: "You performed very well today. I will not assign you any tasks now. Task Channel and show the link Guide: Every day from 9 am to 6 pm, a task is released every 10-20 minutes, a total of 21 tasks per day. Salary and benefits: Complete tasks 1-2-3: 150 rupees. Complete tasks 4-5-6: 150 rupees Complete tasks 7-8-9: 210 rupees. Complete tasks 10-11-12: 210 rupees. Complete tasks 13-14-15: 210 rupees. Complete tasks 16-17-18: 210 rupees. Complete tasks 19-20-21: 210 rupees (Salary will be settled after completing 3 tasks) Complete all 21 tasks and you will get an additional 5000 rupees reward, with a minimum daily income of 11260 rupees. I will send you the group link at 4:40 pm in the evening. You need to study in the working group and will also receive tasks in this group. Please pay attention to Telegram messages. Dear, please remember to log in at 4:40 pm to join the task release group! Our admin will add you to group VIP, you just join the group screenshot." I have joined me telegram group https://t.me/+Ms2i72481ZA1MDg! -provided by Vardhika Rawat (Telegram User Name @vardhika9), Vardhika Rawat has confirmed my joining in that group (Group 30) when I send her a screenshot of joining. She asked me to stay active at tomorrow morning for work at 8:40 Am. Because task 1 will start at 9Am in group. On 11-08-2025, Vardhika Rawat (Telegram User Name @vardhika9) has informed me at 09:00 that Task 1 START NOW check the group open task 1 link give 5 star and send me a screenshot here. I have completed the task to open the link provided, i.e. was location of a restaurant and screenshot of link opened (Open Air Restaurant) was sent to her then task 2 and 3 completed similar to task 1, however locations of restaurants were different and screenshots were sent to her. My bank account no.3290000102058163 was credited *with Rs. 150/- on 11-08-2025 at 09:22 AM. I have completed task 4 and 5, similar to Task 1,2 and 3. Next Task 6 was released at 10:10 Am on 11-08-2025 with the message that "task 6 is a welfare task. The merchant will give you a 30% commission. You need to transfer the money to the merchant account to help the hotel order rooms and increase the number of hotel orders, so that you can get a generous rebate. It will arrive in 10 minutes, because there will be a professional mentor to guide you to complete the order. To complete this task every employee needs to choose the amount in the project charts and make a payment to join the share, Example you join a share for Rs.1000/- you will get back Rs. 1450/- within 10 to 15 minutes. This is an important task you need to open merchant account. Since this is your first time, I suggest you choose 1000 and give it a try. "I have chosen 1000 as suggested and paid Rs. 1000/- to the UPI Id seemamehra5494@okhdfcbank as the QR Code provided by the Vardhika Rawat (Telegram User Name @vardhika9). She further asked me to register a merchant account to complete the task and provided a link https://hotlo-tuiovs.cc to register a merchant account with Invitation Code 716625. I have successfully sign up the merchant account with the help of her and 1find my merchant account ID 389944.She further asked me to "Please add the merchant tutor https://t.me/Nikhil Reddy 47 He will guide you how to complete the task, tell the tutor your Task Code: A1056227. Please text to him he is your tutor today. He will help you complete the next great job," I have click on the link https://t.me/Nikhil Reddy 47and Task Code: A1056227 was task and processing amount for you. In the further task you can send direct to him. Thank you sent to Nikhil Reddy (User Name @Nikhil Reddy 47) on telegram and the screenshot of the same was also sent to Vardhika Rawat (Telegram User Name @vardhika9). Further, Nikhil Reddy (Telegram User Name @NikhilReddy_47) has posted message on my telegram "Hello, nice to meet you, 1 am your task mentor, / will lead you to complete the task and earn commissions. Your information has been successfully entered into the system and the task code A10S6227 has taken effect. / will teach you how to use the Rs. 1000/- you just recharged to earn Rs. 300/. Ok?" He guided me to complete the task and I have completed the task accordingly and User Name @NikhilReddy 47) provided me the Receptionist link [https://t.me/Akanksha Roshni]. My Merchant account (ID389944) balance becomes 1300. Further, Nikhil Reddy (Telegram and Withdrawal Code: AE1300KW and asked to send this code to your receptionist, now she will be responsible for the formal task and your salary and withdrawal". / have click on the link https://t.me/AkankshaRoshnil provided by the Nikhil Reddy (Telegram User Name @NikhilReddy_47) and 1 have sent the Withdrawal Code: AE1300KW to Akanksha Roshni (https://t.me/Akanksha Roshni1)(Telegram User Name Akanksha Roshnil). She has posted me a message on telegram "Hello dear, 1 am Akanksha Roshni your personal receptionist and it is my pleasure to serve you. She has asked my bank account details and I have submitted to her. She has posted a screenshot of payment successful of Rs. 1450/- vide reference no.UTR/RRN 522310813064 on 11-08-2025 at 10:55 Am and 1 have confirmed the amount received. Thereafter, task 7, 8 and 9 completed similar to task 1,2 and 3 i.e. sending of screenshots of clicking on the link provided in Group 30 which were different restaurants locations. I have received salary of Rs. 210/- through transaction ID 16395975493 on 11-08-2025. Thereafter, task 10 and 11 were completed similar to task 1,2,3,4,5,7, 8 and 9 i.e. sending of screenshots by clicking on the link provided in Group 30 which were different restaurants locations. Thereafter, task 12 was released similar to task 6 and Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) suggested me to choose 1 (1000), I choose Rs. 1000/- as* *suggested by her and paid Rs. 1000/- to same UPI ID of task 6. I have earned profit of Rs. 300/- on Rs. 1000/- according to task and shows my merchant account but amount of Rs. 1300/- was not credited yet in my bank account, in the same task 12, Rs. 2000/- were also to be paid in 2 steps according to link posted in Group 30 which gives surety of profit of Rs. 600/, So, I have further recharge for Rs. 2000/- and paid to the UPI ID of Ashutosh Pawar i.e. ashutoshdpawar901@oksbias provided by Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) UPI ref no. 689003321881 on 11-08-2025 at 12:31 PM. Payment of total amount Rs. 4110/- (1000+300 profit+2000+600profit+210(salary of three task 10,11 &12)] was credited to my bank account no.3290000102058163 by UTR 522399116392 on 11-08-2025 at 12:58:21 PM. Thereafter, task 13 and 14 were completed similar to task 1,2,3,4,5,7, 8,9,10 & 11 i.e. sending of screenshots by clicking on the link provided in Group 30 which were different restaurants locations. Task 15 was released similar to task 6 and 12 but it has three steps. I have chosen Rs. 3000 in 1" step and paid Rs. 3000/- to the UPI ID of Ravi Sharma i.e. raviraj13072001-1@okaxis reference no. 689007830081 as ID was provided by Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) on 11-08-2025 at 02:05 PM. This task has born separated in telegram group by the team of scammers with the name of group Project X132 Task 15' with 5 members in which myself, one Task Mentor ie. Scammer (Nikhil Reddy using telegram User Name Nikhil Reddy 47) and 3 other members team of scammers which built trust to me in thin scam one of which is Kandhei Roy telegram user name @Roy_269/ were in that group of 5 members. In the 2 steps of Task 15, Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) asked me to add Rs. 10000 in the UPI ID of Yogendra Solanki i.e. nikkirajasolanka1234-3@okaxis and I have paid Rs. 10900-vide UPI reference no. 289781954279 on 11-08-2025 at 02:44 PM. In the 3 steps of Task 15. Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) asked me to add Rs. 35000 in the bank account no.309029462898 of Mayank Gupta IFSC RATN0000138 RBL Bank Branch Jainpurwas and I have paid Rs. 35000/- in this account through UPI reference no. 689011191253 on 11-08-2025 at 03:34 PM. 3 steps were completed but amount of task 15 was not yet credited in my bank account. In the meantime, I have completed task 16,17 and 18 posted in telegram Group 30 similar to task 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11, 13 & 14 and Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) credited my bank account 3290000102058163 with Rs. 210/-(salary of three tasks) by transaction ID16399769450 on 11-08-2025 at 03:35PM. In the meantime, I have completed task 19,20 and 21 posted in telegram Group 30 similar to task 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11, 13, 14, 16,17,18 and Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) credited my bank account 3290000102058163 with Rs. 210/-salary of three tasks) on 11-05-2025 at 04:50PM. Task 15 was not yet closed by the team of scammers and asked forced to deposit me repeatedly by Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) and Task Mentor Nikhil Reddy by manipulating with mistakes with the help of other three members of group "Project X132 Task 15' which were also in the team of these scammers and I have deposited the amount as told by them on 11-08-2025, 12-08-2025 and 13-08-2025. At last Akanksha Roshni (Receptionist) referred me to new receptionist Manik Nikita (Telegram User Name @manik nikita) on 12-08-2025 at 13:20 and she also made seam with me and I have deposited the following money with the help of my husband from the SBI bank account no. 20150590158 of my husband (Sh. Sohan Lal) to the following bank accounts details provided by the team of scammers as told by them during chattings on telegram as ander.1. Rs. 696040/- on 12-08-2025 vide UTR SBINR52025081295224770 through RTGS to Chhagan Lal, Account no. 500101014242753 of City Union Bank ISRO Layout Bangalore (IFSC*

CIU30000640), 2. Rs. 112000/- on 12-08-2025 vide UTR SBIN125224604046 through NEFT to Dihora Kalpesh Bhal Hasmukh Bhai Account No. 5838541022 of Central Bank of India Amroli (IFSC CHIN0280514) and 3. Rs. 313218/-on 13-08-2025 vide UTR SHINRS2025081395327049 through RTGS to Mohammed Khader Ali Khan Account No. 50010101430214 of City Union Bank Siddiamber Bazar Hyderabad (IFSC CIUB0000264), Scammers have also deposited amount of Rs. 10000/-in my account on 12-08-2025 at 01:26 PM vide IMPS Ref no 522413083035 to build trust. They have also credited my account with a very small amount of Rs. 210/etc. of which total of approx. Rs. 2000 per day on 12-08-2025 and 13-08-2025 for other tasks of sending of screenshots of locations of different restaurants hotels Group 'Project X132 Task 15" was already removed by Task Mentor Nikhil Reddy knowingly and he has also now deleted his Telegram User Name Nikhil Reddy 47 and now shows as deleted account but chattings are available, however I have already made pdf from google drive from my husband's mobile of all chattings with me by the scammers except chatting of Group Project X132 Task 15" was already removed by Task Mentor Nikhil Reddy So, I am enclosing all telegram chats of scammers Vardhika Rawat, Akanksha Roshni, Nikhil Reddy, Group 30, Manik Nikita, Kandhei Roy) and Whatsapp chat of mobile no. +91 9201122387ElakshiBhatia Now, my merchant account(ID389944) is showing balance of Rs. 1477278/- but Scammers are not crediting the amount of Rs. 1477278/- in my bank account. Link of my merchant account 1https://hotlo-tajovs.cc and this is linked with Marriott Hotel as showing. They have made scam with showing this as a merchant account. I am now falling victim to this scam. Chattings of scammers team from 10-08-2025 to 14-08-2025 are enclosed herewith as attachments in pdf for your reference and further action to find out the scammers and strict actions against them as per law and make your best efforts to refund my aforesaid money please. It is therefore requested to kindly make your best efforts to refund my aforesaid money by taking from the aforesaid scammers as soon as possible please I shall be highly thank/jul to you or this. With profound Regards Yours sincerely, SD-Sakshi Gupta W/o Sh. Sohan Lal V.P.O. Bibipur Distt. Jind Now residing at H. No. 30, Asa Singh Garden, Baldev Nagar, Ambala City-134007, Mobile No. 9896957597 My husband Contact no.7206040235 dated 19-08-2025."

3. Learned counsel for the petitioner has iterated that the petitioner has been falsely implicated into the FIR in question. Learned counsel has further iterated that he has no connection with the complainant. The FIR contains vague, bald and unsubstantiated allegations without attributing any specific role to the petitioner. Learned counsel has further submitted that one of the friends of the petitioner, namely, Rohit Meena had told the petitioner that someone had deposited an amount of ₹35,000/- in the account of the petitioner, and in good faith, on the asking of said Rohit Meena, the

petitioner had got withdrawn the aforesaid amount of ₹35,000/- from his bank account and handed-over the same to Rohit Meena. Learned counsel has iterated that apart from this, the petitioner has nothing to do with the offence/ money in question. Learned counsel has submitted that the case rests entirely on documentary evidence all of which is already in the possession of the investigating agency.

3.1. Learned counsel has further submitted that there is no need for custodial interrogation of the petitioner as nothing incriminating remains to be recovered from him. Moreover, there is no likelihood of the petitioner absconding from the process of justice or tampering with the prosecution evidence, in case, he is enlarged on pre-arrest bail. On strength of these submissions, the grant of anticipatory bail is entreated for.

4. *Per contra*, learned State counsel has filed reply by way of an affidavit dated 13.02.2026, in the Court today, which is taken on record. Raising submissions in tandem with the said reply, learned State counsel has opposed the grant of anticipatory bail to the petitioner by arguing that the offence committed by the petitioner is serious in nature. The relevant of the aforesaid reply reads thus:

> "*13. That as far as role of the accused-petitioner is concerned, the accused-petitioner has been booked under Sections 316 (2) and 318 (4) BNS and the allegations are serious and grave in nature, as an amount of Rs.35,000/- has been sent directly through UPI payment by the Complainant, on the asking of Rohit Meena who is an acquaintance of the accused-petitioner. Thus, the accused-petitioner in this way, has committed the offences under Sections 316 (2) and 318 (4) BNS. Therefore, the State of Haryana is respectfully submitting before this Hon'ble Court that the present criminal miscellaneous petition of the accused-petitioner may kindly be dismissed with cost.*"

According to learned State counsel, the petitioner has been specifically attributed the role of cheating the complainant after conspiring with his co-accused, namely, Rohit Meena. Learned State counsel has further submitted that the economic offences involving misuse of banking systems are serious in nature affecting society at large and thorough custodial interrogation of the petitioner is imperative to uncover the entire conspiracy and the financial trail. The investigating agency is still in the process of gathering evidence for which custodial interrogation of the petitioner is necessary. Considering the seriousness of the allegations and the stage of investigation dismissal of the instant petition is prayed for.

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

6. As per the case put forth in the FIR in question, indubitably, serious allegations have been levelled against the petitioner. From the perusal of impugned order, it is borne out that learned Court below had observed that incidents involving cyber fraud, particularly those targeting innocent individuals, have witnessed a significant and alarming rise. It has been found by learned Court below that the petitioner had adopted contradictory stands with respect to the amount of ₹35,000/- that was directly credited to his bank account. Further, learned Court below observed that inconsistency in the stand taken by the petitioner raises serious doubts regarding the veracity of the defence put forth, and, no plausible or satisfactory explanation has been furnished as to how the petitioner's bank account surfaced in similar cases registered in different States.

6.1. The allegations relate to unlawful financial activities and suspected fraud which constitutes economic offences of a serious nature. At this stage, there is sufficient material suggesting that the petitioner played an active role in facilitating the transaction in question. The contention of the petitioner that he has no connection with the co-accused cannot be accepted at this stage, particularly when the preliminary investigation point towards the complicity of the petitioner in the offence in question. The exact nature and extent of the involvement of the petitioner requires deeper investigation for which custodial interrogation of the petitioner may be essential.

7. It is befitting to mention here that adjudication of bail pleas, particularly in cases concerning cybercrimes and online fraud, necessitate a meticulous evaluation of several pivotal factors. The paramount factor is the nature, gravity and seriousness of the offense, coupled with its potential societal ramifications. The proliferation of online frauds and cybercrimes poses a significant threat, as it systematically erodes public confidence in digital financial transaction platforms. Such erosion runs counter to the aspirations of an advanced and digitally empowered "*Digital Bharat*" and, thus, warrants a heightened degree of judicial circumspection. These offenses are characterized by their capacity to aggrieve a multitude of victims simultaneously, often with a single act of commission. The deleterious consequences of cybercrimes transcend individual boundaries, imperiling numerous unsuspecting citizens. The gravity of such transgressions cannot, therefore, be understated. They not only jeopardize the financial security and trust reposed by individuals in financial payment

gateways and platforms, but also inherently expose the broader populace to analogous threats. Indeed, cybercrime in our nation operates akin to a silent virus — insidious, disruptive, and exacting a toll on society that extends far beyond mere pecuniary loss, encompassing the bedrock of trust, security, and national progress.

7.1. Given the inherent nature and profound gravity of such offenses and their wide-ranging cascading effects on both society and financial institutions, this Court finds itself disinclined to grant the relief of anticipatory bail as prayed for. To do otherwise would be to turn a *Nelson's eye* to the profound and far-reaching detrimental impact of these digital depredations. 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, appear to be established 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.

8. Moreover, 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 allegations against the petitioner are serious in nature involving the misuse of bank account for illegal financial transaction. The investigation is at nascent stage. It is further 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. 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, appear to be established 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*** : ***1997 SCC (Cri) 1039***, the Hon'ble 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.*"

9. In view of the gravity of the allegations, the nature of the offence and the pending recoveries and the requirement of the custodial interrogation for a fair and thorough investigation, this Court is of the considered opinion that the petitioner does not deserve the concession of anticipatory bail in the factual *milieu* of the case in hand.

10. In view of the prevenient ratiocination, it is ordained thus:

(i) The instant petition is devoid of merits and is hereby **dismissed**;

(ii) Nothing said hereinabove shall be deemed to be an expression of opinion upon merits of the case/investigation;

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

(SUMEET GOEL)
JUDGE

February 19, 2026
mahavir

Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes/No

Whether reportable: Yes/No