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**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH****CRM-M-9309-2026**

Rehana Khairalia

....Petitioner

versus

State of Punjab

....Respondent

Date of Decision: March 23, 2026**Date of Uploading: March 23, 2026****CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SUMEET GOEL****Present:** Mr. Malkeet Singh Balianwali, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr. Jaypreet Singh, DAG, Punjab.

Mr. Munish Garg, Advocate for the complainant.

SUMEET GOEL, J. (Oral)

Present petition has been filed under Section 482 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (hereinafter to be referred as 'the BNSS') for grant of pre-arrest/anticipatory bail to the petitioner, in case bearing FIR No.143 dated 15.10.2025, registered under Sections 419, 420, 467, 468, 471, 120-B IPC and Section 24 of the Immigration Act, at Police Station Dhanaula, District Barnala.

2. The gravamen of the FIR in question reflects that, the FIR in question was registered on the basis of a complaint made by the complainant–Akashdeep Singh, who in his complaint made to the police has alleged that the petitioner (herein), in connivance with co-accused, induced him for a sum of approximately ₹30 lakhs on the pretext of sending him abroad to the United Kingdom on an open work permit. The complainant has further alleged that she had transferred the said amount into different

bank accounts as instructed by the petitioner and other co-accused. He has further alleged that fake visa documents and an air ticket were sent to him. Upon these set of allegations, the instant FIR came to be registered against the petitioner and other accused persons.

3. Learned counsel for the petitioner has iterated that a bare perusal of the FIR itself shows that allegations leveled against the petitioner are concocted, improbable and devoid of any merit. Learned counsel has further iterated that the petitioner has been falsely implicated into the FIR in question. It is argued that it is an admitted case of the complainant himself that he has received WhatsApp communications from one Malkit Singh, who is residing in the USA, and in this regard no forensic examination of the devices has been conducted.

3.1. Learned counsel asserts that the custodial interrogation should not be used as a punitive measure and is justified only when absolutely necessary for the recovery of material evidence. Learned counsel has argued that nothing is to be recovered from the petitioner. Furthermore, the petitioner is ready to join the investigation and hence no useful purpose would be served by sending him behind the bars. On the aforesaid submissions, the grant of anticipatory bail is entreated for.

4. *Per contra*, learned State counsel while raising arguments in tandem with the reply has opposed the grant of anticipatory bail to the petitioner by arguing that the offence committed by the petitioner is serious in nature involving cheating of a huge amount of Rs.30 lakhs. Relevant part of the reply filed by the State reads thus:

“19. That the material collected during inquiry established that the petitioner was the principal negotiator

who finalized the immigration arrangement and demanded Rs. 30,00,000/-.

20. That substantial amounts were directly credited into the petitioner's bank account, and she also personally received cash payments in the presence of co-accused.

21. That the petitioner supplied forged visa documents and a forged airline ticket and represented them as genuine, thereby inducing the complainant to travel to Delhi Airport.

The use of multiple names and fabricated credentials demonstrates calculated planning and deliberate deception.

22. That the financial trail and documentary material directly link the petitioner with the acts constituting cheating, forgery, use of forged documents and criminal conspiracy.

23. That the dishonest intention existed from inception, as no genuine immigration process had been undertaken and forged documents were supplied to mislead the complainant.

The allegations are supported by documentary evidence, banking transactions and inquiry findings, and clearly disclose a prima facie case.”

Learned State counsel has asserted that the petitioner has been specifically named in the FIR in question to the effect that the complainant had paid huge amount of Rs.30 lakhs to the petitioner and other accused, in order to send the complainant to the United Kingdom, but the petitioner in collusion with his co-accused, instead, cheated the complainant, and neither the complainant was sent abroad nor was the amount returned to him. According to learned State counsel, the offence committed by the petitioner caused substantial financial and emotional distress to the victim. Considering the seriousness of the allegations, custodial interrogation of the petitioner maybe necessary to unearth the broader conspiracy, identify co-accused and recover the ill-gotten money. Given the severity of the offence, there exists a substantial likelihood that the petitioner may abscond or

tamper with the evidence, if he is enlarged on bail. On the strength of these submissions, dismissal of the petition in hand is entreated 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, the allegations against the petitioner are grave and specific regarding receipt of substantial amounts in her bank account. The petitioner is specifically named in the FIR and there are direct/specific allegations regarding defrauding the complainant to the tune of Rs.30 lakhs on the pretext of sending the complainant to the United Kingdom, but neither the petitioner honored her promise nor had returned the money in question to the complainant. The arguments raised by learned counsel for the petitioner that the case is based on digital evidence and does not require custodial interrogation cannot be accepted at this stage. The investigation is still at a nascent stage and involves tracing of financial transactions, recovery of relevant documents, and identification of the larger conspiracy.

6.1. The offence in question does not merely involve financial deceit but strikes at the very fabric of social trust, involving elements of human trafficking and cross-border immigration fraud, which are not only grave in nature but also have far-reaching consequences on public order. Cases of this nature, where vulnerable individuals are lured with false promises of lawful migration and are subsequently subjected to exploitation, fall within the ambit of organized human trafficking and merit strict judicial scrutiny and deterrence. Human trafficking under the garb of immigration consultancy is a growing menace which preys upon the desperation and dreams of unsuspecting citizens. The Courts must remain vigilant and ensure

that such rackets are not emboldened by leniency at the pre-trial stage. The fraudulent inducement for illegal migration, followed by subjecting individuals to inhumane and life-threatening conditions abroad, not only reflects criminal intent but also constitutes a serious affront to human dignity and national interest. The Court cannot overlook the broader public interest involved in cases of immigration fraud, especially when they border on transnational human trafficking. Such offences necessitate a strong and principled judicial response to prevent their recurrence.

6.2. Such offences strike at the core of public trust and reflect a disturbing trend prevalent in this region, where unscrupulous individuals posing as travel facilitators exploit the aspirations of innocent citizens seeking opportunities abroad. These fraudulent activities not only cause severe financial and emotional distress but also undermine the integrity of lawful immigration systems. Therefore, individuals involved in such organized deceit must be dealt with firmly and in accordance with the law, leaving no room for leniency.

6.3. Furthermore, the investigating agency has sought the custodial interrogation of the petitioner for effective recovery, verification of facts, and to establish the broader conspiracy, if any, behind the occurrence. No cause *may* 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 complainant has categorically stated that the petitioner had defrauded the complainant of a substantial amount under the false pretext of sending him to the United Kingdom, which caused severe financial and emotional distress.

7. It is 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. It is imperative that every person in the Society can expect an atmosphere free from foreboding & fear of any transgression. 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 [State v. Anil Sharma, (1997) 7 SCC 187 : 1997 SCC (Cri) 1039]***, the 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.”

8. In view of the seriousness of the allegations, this Court finds no compelling ground to extend the benefit of discretionary relief to the petitioner. Moreover, custodial interrogation of the petitioner is necessary

for an effective investigation & to unravel the truth. The petition is, thus, devoid of merits and is hereby **dismissed**.

9. Nothing said hereinabove shall be deemed to be an expression of opinion upon merits of the case/investigation.

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

(SUMEET GOEL)
JUDGE

March 23, 2026
Naveen

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