

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

Cri. Anticipatory Bail Application No. 945 of 2026

Dinesh Ramesh Shetty
Age 48 Yrs., Occ-Business,
R/at.- Building No.10,
House No.01, Sector No.21,
Yamuna Nagar Nagadi,
District Pune.

... Applicant

Versus

The State of Maharashtra
(At the instance of IO in
CR/405/2025 – Nigadi
Police Station, Pune)

... Respondent

Mr Tejas Hilage, for the Applicant (through VC).
Ms Sangeeta E Phad, APP, for the Respondent / State.
PSI Shirke AB a/w HC 1909, Santosh Ghante, Nigdi Police
Station, present.

Coram: R.N. Laddha, J.

Date: 15 April 2026

P.C.:

By this application, the applicant seeks bail in connection with CR No.405 of 2025, registered at Nigdi Police Station, Pune, for offences punishable under Section 143(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and Sections 4 and 5 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

2. It is the case of the prosecution that on 3 September 2024, acting on a tip regarding women being coerced into the sex trade for financial gain, the police laid a trap with the help of a decoy customer and witnesses at Love Birds Lodge. During the raid, the police rescued a girl engaged in prostitution. It is alleged that the applicant is the owner of the Lodge.

3. Mr Tejas Hilage, the learned Counsel appearing on behalf of the applicant, asserting the applicant's innocence, contends that the applicant has been falsely implicated in the crime. He submits that the applicant was not present at the spot when the raid was conducted. The applicant neither recruited, exploited, transported, nor harboured the victim through threats, force, abduction, fraud, or deception. According to the learned Counsel, the applicant has been unfairly made a scapegoat, and custodial interrogation is unnecessary since nothing is to be recovered from the applicant. The investigation has concluded, culminating in a charge sheet. The applicant is ready and willing to abide by any conditions this Court deems fit to impose.

4. Ms Sangeeta Phad, the learned Additional Public Prosecutor representing the respondent/ State, opposes the applicant's request for pre-arrest bail. It is submitted that the

allegations against the applicant are of a grave and serious nature. Although the learned APP fairly acknowledges that the investigation has concluded and a charge sheet has been filed, she raises concerns about potential evidence tampering and witness influence if the applicant is granted bail.

5. This Court has given anxious consideration to the submissions canvassed across the Bar and perused the records.

6. Upon a careful perusal of the record, it *prima facie* emerges that the allegations sought to be imputed to the applicant rest substantially upon the statement of the victim. A plain reading of the said statement indicates that the victim, being a major and of her own volition, had independently contacted and engaged in acts of prostitution. The contents of the victim's statement do not, at any stage, disclose any material suggesting that the applicant had, in any manner, threatened, coerced, induced, or recruited the victim into prostitution. There is an absence of *prima facie* evidence demonstrating the essential ingredients of compulsion, exploitation, or inducement attributable to the applicant. It is further pertinent to note that the investigation has been concluded and the chargesheet has already been filed before the competent Court. In such circumstances, no further custodial interrogation of the

applicant appears warranted.

7. Insofar as the apprehensions expressed by the prosecution regarding the possibility of the applicant tampering with evidence or influencing witnesses are concerned, the same are speculative in nature and can be adequately addressed by imposing appropriate conditions.

8. In light of the foregoing, 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 CR No.405 of 2025, registered at Nigdi Police Station, Pune, 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, himself or through any other person, shall tamper with the evidence or influence witnesses.

(iii) The applicant shall not contact the victim in any manner whatsoever.

9. The application stands disposed of accordingly.

[R.N. Laddha, J.]