



**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION**

CRIMINAL APPEAL No. OF 2026
[arising out of SLP (Crl.) No. 7919 OF 2026]

SHANTANU BHARDWAJ

APPELLANT

VERSUS

STATE OF CHHATTISGARH

RESPONDENT

ORDER

1. Leave granted.
2. The High Court of Chhattisgarh at Bilaspur by the impugned judgment and order dated 23rd February, 2026 has declined the appellant's prayer for suspension of sentence, pending a decision on his revision challenging the trial court's finding of conviction recorded under Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and imposition of sentence of three years' rigorous imprisonment as well as the appellate order affirming the conviction and sentence.
3. The prayer for suspension of sentence was rejected by the High Court considering that the appellant, along with the co-accused, had committed fraud to the tune of Rs.8,00,000/- (Rupees eight lakh) only against the complainant on the pretext of providing him employment.
4. It is not in dispute that the appellant has been behind bars for around one year and four months.
5. We have heard learned counsel appearing for the parties and perused the materials on record.

6. Having regard to the period of incarceration suffered by the appellant as well as the fact that the revision is not likely to be finally heard anytime soon, we are inclined to suspend the sentence and enlarge him on bail. Ordered accordingly.

7. Accordingly, we set aside the impugned judgment and order. Appellant shall be released on bail, subject to such terms and conditions as may be imposed by the trial court.

8. Appellant will diligently pursue his revision before the High Court. If he is found unrepresented at the time of hearing, the High Court will be at liberty to pass appropriate order including cancelling the bail granted by this order. The High Court may to decide the revision at an early date without granting unnecessary adjournments.

9. We clarify that the observations made in this order and grant of bail will not be treated as findings on the merits of the case.

10. The appeal is, accordingly, allowed on the aforesaid terms.

11. Pending interlocutory application(s), if any, stand disposed of.

.....J.
[DIPANKAR DATTA]

.....J.
[AUGUSTINE GEORGE MASIH]

**New Delhi;
May 20, 2026.**

ITEM NO.45

COURT NO.8

SECTION II-C

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No(s). 7919/2026

[Arising out of impugned final judgment and order dated 23-02-2026 in CRLR No. 82/2026 passed by the High Court of Chhatisgarh at Bilaspur]

SHANTANU BHARDWAJ**Petitioner(s)****VERSUS****STATE OF CHHATTISGARH****Respondent(s)**

**IA No. 132433/2026 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING C/C OF THE
IMPUGNED JUDGMENT**

IA No. 132434/2026 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING O.T.

Date : 20-05-2026 This matter was called on for hearing today.

**CORAM : HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE DIPANKAR DATTA
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE AUGUSTINE GEORGE MASIH**

**For Petitioner(s) :Mr. Sameer Shrivastava, AOR
Mr. Prasanna Mohan, Adv.
Mr. Chirag Joshi, Adv.
Ms. Shruti Singh, Adv.**

**For Respondent(s) :Mrs. Prerana Dhall, Adv.
Mr. Ambuj Swaroop, Adv.
Mr. Prashant Singh, AOR**

**UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following
O R D E R**

1. Leave granted.
2. The appeal is allowed in terms of the signed order placed on the file.

(JATINDER KAUR)
P.S. to REGISTRAR

(SUDHIR KUMAR SHARMA)
COURT MASTER (NSH)