

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

CRIMINAL APPEAL NO. _____ OF 2026
(Arising out of SLP(Crl.) No.1613/2026)

SUNNY CHAUHAN

APPELLANT(S)

VERSUS

STATE OF HARYANA

RESPONDENT(S)

O R D E R

1. Leave granted.
2. The instant matter was instituted against an innocuous order dated 22.12.2025, passed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. *Vide* this order, the High Court dismissed the appellant's application for preponement of the hearing of his regular bail petition. The said bail application was moved by the appellant in connection with FIR No. 173/2025 registered at Police Station Sector 17, Faridabad. The grievance was that despite the appellant being in custody since 11.08.2025, no effective hearing had taken place. Accordingly, he sought preponement of the hearing, but the same was declined.
3. During the course of proceedings before us, it emerged that various High Courts, including the Punjab and Haryana High Court from where the instant appeal arose, have been

frequently adjourning bail applications. As a result, numerous such applications have been left pending for over a year. On taking cognizance of the pendency of bail applications before various High Courts, this Court *vide* its order dated 04.02.2026 made the following observations, followed by certain directions:

"3. All that we wish to observe at this stage is that we are extremely disappointed to see the manner in which prayers pertaining to the liberty of individuals are being dealt with. We understand that Courts bear the burden of heavy dockets, featuring several matters that demand prioritization. However, among the miscellaneous matters, nothing can be more important than deciding the fate of an application for bail.

4. It is equally disturbing to know that in the Patna High Court, bail applications are not listed even for a preliminary hearing for months at a stretch. Various matters have been coming to this Court, merely seeking directions for the pending bail applications to be duly listed before the Patna High Court.

5. We are conscious of the fact that listing and prioratisation of matters is the exclusive prerogative of the Hon'ble Chief Justices of the respective High Courts, they being the masters of their roster. However, if people continue to languish in jails; their bail applications are not being heard, and there is an air of uncertainty surrounding when they will get to know the fate of their applications, we believe that this Court is under a bounden duty to lay down certain mandatory guidelines. However, before we do so, we consider it appropriate to direct the Registrar Generals of all the High Courts to send complete details of the anticipatory bail/regular bail/suspension of sentence applications pending in the respective High Courts, along with the date of filing, date of decision, or the next date of hearing. Such details shall be furnished, for the time being, in respect of all the applications which came to be filed on or after 01.01.2025. If the applications filed prior to 01.01.2025 are still pending, details thereof shall also be furnished.

6. The above-stated information be furnished within a period of four weeks.

7. All the State Governments are directed to fully cooperate with the High Courts for early and time-bound adjudication of the bail applications/prayer for suspension of sentence. The State counsels should be ready with the relevant information as and when the bail applications are listed for hearing, provided that a copy thereof has been submitted in the office of the learned Advocate General and/or the learned Public Prosecutor at least three days in advance. In such matters, the Investigating Officers or the authorized officer can be permitted to appear online also.

8. The Registrar Generals of the High Courts are further directed to circulate this order among the Hon'ble Judges of their High Courts with our fervent appeal to them to expeditiously dispose of the pending bail applications.

9. The Hon'ble Chief Justices are also requested to revisit their roster/listing arrangements. Wherever they find that there is a mismatch between the total pendency and the Bench allocated for deciding such matters, they may enlarge the roster for listing of the bail matters."

4. In deference thereto, most of the High Courts have furnished the requisite information, which the learned Senior Counsel for the appellant has tabulated for our reference. Though the information is readily available, we do not deem it necessary to incorporate the same in this order, especially since most of the High Courts have taken necessary initiatives to ensure timely disposal of the pending bail applications. However, it appears that in some High Courts, such as the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad and the High Court of Patna, the problem persists, despite the fact that the Hon'ble Judges are adjudicating hundreds of cases in a single day. We believe that this

enduring issue has been caused by the exorbitant volume of existing cases, which makes the timely disposal of recently-filed matters all the more arduous.

5. We strongly believe that it is for the Hon'ble Chief Justices of the High Courts, being masters of the roster, to evolve effective mechanisms to deal with the prolonged pendency of bail applications. For the same, the Hon'ble Chief Justices may consider equitably distributing bail applications among all the judges, including those sitting in Division Benches. This is, however, recorded only as a suggestion, since we are not aware of and do not intend to intrude on the internal functioning of the High Courts. That being said, we leave it to the Hon'ble Chief Justices of the respective High Courts and the Administrative Committees thereof to put into place some mechanisms, which will ensure that all bail applications have a definite date of hearing and that their listing is prioritized.

6. Regardless, this order shall not be construed as an aspersion on the functioning of any High Court.

7. To ensure the timely disposal of bail applications by all the High Courts, certain suggestions have been put up before us, which we have enlisted below:

(i) Bail applications may be listed on a weekly or fortnightly basis. For the same, an automated software could be utilized/developed, which would ensure that bail applications are listed after every two weeks.

(ii) It may be made mandatory for the Union/State to file a status report before the first hearing. It may also be made compulsory for the counsel for the appellant/petitioner to serve a copy of the bail application, in advance, in the office of the Advocate General or any designated agency of the Union/State, and proof of such service should also be compulsory for filing the bail application.

(iii) Depending on the total pendency and the resources available, fresh bail applications may be listed on alternate days, or at least once a week. Doing so would require mandatory representation of the Union/State, to whom an advance copy has already been supplied, as suggested above. Evolving such a procedure would also necessarily mean that the practice of issuing notice or admission of bail applications would have to be dispensed with.

(iv) Bail applications which are not taken up on a given date may be automatically re-listed. It goes without saying that if the bail applications could not be taken up due to heavy pendency and/or for any other unforeseen reason, the software utilized for listing them should ensure that they are re-listed within a week or on a priority basis, ideally before fresh bail applications are listed.

(v) The High Courts may also resolve to fix definite timelines for the disposal of the bail applications.

(vi) The High Courts may consider developing a practice of discouraging the Union/State counsel from seeking avoidable or casual adjournments by reminding them of the Court's solemn duty to protect the most precious fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

(vii) This Court has also noticed that in NDPS matters, bail applications are not being heard on account of the non-availability of the FSL reports. We understand that, pursuant to the directions issued by this Court on the

judicial side, most of the States have, by now, established forensic laboratories to ensure the timely submission of reports; however, much improvement is still required. The Hon'ble Chief Justices of the High Courts are, accordingly, requested to take up the matter with the respective State Government/s and other agencies to ensure that FSL reports are submitted within a reasonable period of time.

(viii) For the purpose of timely and effective adjudication of bail applications, the responsibility of Investigating Officers, especially in victim-centric cases, cannot be overstated. They must ensure, while submitting the investigation report/s, that: (a) The victims or their close family have been duly associated; (b) They have been informed of the investigation report being filed; and (c) They have been informed of their right to participate in the proceedings and to engage their own counsel or seek legal aid counsel. It goes without saying that the victim has the right to participate at every stage of the proceedings, including at the time of hearing of the accused's bail application.

(ix) A digital police portal may be developed to upload status reports and ensure their availability before the scheduled hearing. This will ensure that the victim/s as well as the accused are well aware of the status of the ongoing proceedings.

8. At this juncture, we must note that it is our sincere hope that the High Courts, State Governments, and all the concerned Investigating Agencies will collaborate to develop and maintain robust mechanisms for the timely hearing of bail applications, while simultaneously protecting and securing the rights of the victims.

9. With these directions and observations, the instant appeal is disposed of.

.....CJI.
(SURYA KANT)

.....J.
(JOYMALYA BAGCHI)

NEW DELHI;
MAY 11, 2026

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

Petition(s) for Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No(s).1613/2026

[Arising out of impugned final judgment and order dated 22-12-2025 in CRM No.50573/2025 passed by the High Court of Punjab & Haryana at Chandigarh]

SUNNY CHAUHAN

Petitioner(s)

VERSUS

STATE OF HARYANA

Respondent(s)

IA No. 28404/2026 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING C/C OF THE IMPUGNED JUDGMENT

Date : 11-05-2026 This matter was called on for hearing today.

CORAM : HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI

For Petitioner(s) :Dr. Pankaj Nanhera, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Navneet S. Attri, Adv.
Mr. Anurag Mor, Adv.
Mr. Gaurav Kumar, Adv.
Mr. Amit Tiwari, Adv.
Mr. Amarendra Kumar, Adv.
Mr. Kumar Murlidhar, AOR

For Respondent(s) :Mr. Sudarshan Lamba, AOR

Mr. Deepak Thukral, A.A.G.
Mr. Arun Tewatia, A.A.G.
Mr. Saurabh Sachdeva, A.A.G.
Mr. Vineet Kumar, Adv.
Mr. Sarthak Srivastava, Adv.
Mr. Akshay Amritanshu, AOR

Mr. Apoorv Kurup, Sr. Adv.
Ms. Nidhi Mittal, AOR
Mr. Gurjas Singh Narula, Adv.

Mr. Avneesh Arputham, AOR
Mr. Ankit Sharma, Adv.

Mr. Divyakant Lahoti, AOR
Mr. Kartik Lahoti, Adv.
Ms. Akanksha Soni, Adv.

Ms. Shubheksha Dwivedi, Adv.
Ms. Vindhya Mehra, Adv.
Ms. Praveena Bisht, Adv.
Mr. Rahul Maheshwari, Adv.
Mr. K Vinayakam Gupta, Adv.
Ms. Shreya Gokel, Adv.
Mr. Siddharth Tripathi, Adv.

Mr. Pukhrambam Ramesh Kumar, AOR
Mr. Karun Sharma, Adv.
Ms. Anupama Ngangom, Adv.
Ms. Rajkumari Divyasana, Adv.

Mr. Shreekant Neelappa Terdal, AOR

Mr. Sanjai Kumar Pathak, AOR
Mrs. Shashi Pathak, Adv.
Mr. Arvind Kumar Tripathi, Adv.
Ms. Ruhi Sultana, Adv.
Mr. Robin Kumar, Adv.
Mr. Ashish Kumar Sinha, Adv.
Mrs. Binita Jaiswal, Adv.

Mr. Sameer Abhyankar, AOR
Mr. Krishna Rastogi, Adv.
Mr. Aryan Srivastava, Adv.
Ms. Yachna Sharma, Adv.

Mr. Amit Sharma, AOR
Mr. Dipesh Sinha, Adv.
Ms. Pallavi Barua, Adv.
Ms. Aparna Singh, Adv.

Mr. P. I. Jose, AOR
Ms. P S Chandralekha, Adv.

Mr. R. Basant, Sr. Adv.
Mr. P. S. Sudheer, AOR

Mr. Himanshu Shekhar, AOR
Mr. Parth Shekhar, Adv.
Mr. Shubham Singh, Adv.
Ms. Ambali Vedasen, Adv.
Mr. Youkteshwari Prasad, Adv.
Mr. Rayi Peddi Raju, Adv.
Dr. Itbar Singh, Adv.

Ms. K. V. Bharathi Upadhyaya, AOR
Ms. Pritama, Adv.
Ms. Shaivani Gupta, Adv.
Dr. Sunita Sharma, Adv.
Mr. Bipin Vinayak Chandan, Adv.

Mr. Swaran Deep Singh, Adv.

Mr. Mukul Kumar, AOR

Mr. Ahanthem Henry, Adv.

Mr. Ahanthem Rohen Singh, Adv.

Mr. Mohan Singh, Adv.

Mr. Aniket Rajput, Adv.

Ms. Khoisnam Nirmala Devi, Adv.

Mr. Yeshu Mehta, Adv.

Mr. Tanay Hegde, Adv.

Mr. Kumar Mihir, AOR

Mr. Namanjeet Bhatia, Adv.

Mr. Ravi Raghunath, AOR

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

1. Leave granted.
2. The appeal is disposed of in terms of the signed order.
3. All pending applications, if any, also stand disposed of.

(ARJUN BISHT)
ASTT. REGISTRAR-cum-PS

(signed order is placed on the file)

(PREETHI DILEEP KUMAR)
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR