

News

A woman accused of defrauding builders by posing as a SC lawyer is granted bail by the Supreme Court.

A nearly 60-year-old lady was granted bail by the Supreme Court after she was accused of defrauding several people by posing as a lawyer who practiced before the court and taking money from them based on that representation. Poonam Charandas Khanna's Special Leave Petition was granted by a bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan, overturning a Bombay High Court ruling that had denied her normal release.

In relation to FIR No. 34 of 2020 filed at the Kherwadi Police Station in Mumbai, the appellant was taken into custody for violating Sections 420 and 406 read with Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code. According to the prosecution, she falsely claimed to be a skilled counsel and tricked multiple people into parting with substantial sums of money by promising them legal assistance.

The court had detained Khanna since January 29, 2024. She went to the Supreme Court after the Bombay High Court denied her bail request on December 8, 2025.

As the trial was going slowly, the appellant argued before the highest court that she was an elderly woman who had previously been detained for more than two years. Only eight of the twelve witnesses had been questioned, it was said, and it was unclear when the trial would end. The fact that the alleged offenses entailed a possible sentence of seven years was also emphasized.

The victim and the State of Maharashtra opposed the appeal, claiming that the appellant had deceived other victims by taking advantage of their trust and had purposefully impersonated a lawyer despite lacking the necessary legal qualifications.

After weighing the opposing arguments, the Bench determined that there was sufficient evidence to grant bail, especially given the length of incarceration and the seriousness of the offenses.

The appellant must appear before the trial court and be freed on bond with whatever restrictions that may be placed on her to guarantee her attendance at the trial, the judge ordered. She was also instructed not to abuse the freedom afforded and to comply fully with the proceedings. She might have her bail revoked if she broke any of the terms of the bond.

The prosecution claims that Ashok Govindram Mohnani, the informant, was a builder looking for legal representation in two court cases. After introducing him to the accused through an acquaintance, she allegedly promised him legal assistance and represented herself as a

lawyer who practices before the Supreme Court.

She allegedly requested a 15 lakh rupee legal cost, of which 10 lakh rupees were given in advance.

The prosecution also claimed that because the Maharashtra State Electricity Board had not put up electric transformers in the region, the informant and other builders were losing money because there was not enough electricity for development. She allegedly promised the accused that she would start legal action to get transformers installed if this matter was brought to their attention.

The builders allegedly agreed to pay Rs. 2.11 crore of the Rs. 3 crore that the accused had asked for this reason. Between the accused and the builders, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed. Accordingly, the accused's driver allegedly collected Rs. 51 lakh and then another payment of Rs. 20 lakh.

But according to the prosecution, the accused did not start any legal action as required by the MoU. The informant allegedly found out during questioning that the accused was not an advocate and had similarly fooled a number of other people.

Prastut Mahesh Dalvi, Advocate-on-Record, Pranay Saraf, and Vidhi Pankaj Thaker represented the appellant.

Varad Kilor, Siddharth Dharmadhikari, and Aaditya Aniruddha Pande represented the State of Maharashtra. K. Gireesh Kumar, Shibu Devasia Olickal, and Shirang B. Varma represented the victim.



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