

News

In the issue of cheating, the Kerala High Court grants anticipatory bail to Soubin Shahir and other Manjummel Boys producers.



The Court ruled that it was unnecessary to question actor-producer Soubin Shahir and producers Babu Shahir and Shawn Antony in custody.

In a cheating case involving their Malayalam blockbuster film Manjummel Boys, actor-producer Soubin Shahir and producers Shawn Antony and Babu Shahir were granted anticipatory bail by the Kerala High Court on Thursday. [**State of Kerala v. Shawn Antony & Ors**]

According to **Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas**, the nature of the disagreement that resulted in the cheating case being registered does not call for questioning while in custody.

"I believe that most of those factors are governed by documentary evidence because the main basis of this dispute is the parties' investment strategy and profit distribution. "In certain situations, custodial interrogation is not required," the directive said.

However, the Court ordered Soubin and Antony to appear before the investigating officer from 10 AM to 5 PM on July 7 and, if required, on July 8 in order to finish the inquiry.

In Parava Films LLP, Babu, Antony, and Soubin are partners. They signed an investment contract with Siraj Valiyathara Hameed in November 2022. In exchange for 40% of the net profit, Hameed committed to investing ₹7 crore over a predetermined period of time to produce Manjummel Boys.

Hameed demanded payment in accordance with the agreement, citing claims that the picture had made over ₹250 crore. Soubin and Antony claim that they promised Hameed that the same would be carried out following the accounting of all earnings and outlays.

Hameed, however, filed a request in a commercial court for an order prohibiting the petitioners from using the film's earnings and from distributing it on over-the-top (OTT) platforms. The commercial court issued an ex-parte order attaching Parava Films' accounts.

A first information report (FIR) charging violations of Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 406 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating), and 468 (forgery) of the Indian Penal Code was subsequently filed when Hameed filed a police complaint against the producers.

Then, Soubin, Antony, and Babu petitioned the High Court for anticipatory bail, claiming that Hameed's claims were premature because the whole amount of money made from the movie had not yet been paid. Additionally, they filed a separate plea to have the case dismissed, but in May of this year, the High Court denied it.

The producers used provisions from the investment agreement that stated Hameed would only get their portion of the profits if all financial matters had been resolved in their request for anticipatory bail.

They further claimed that Hameed had already started arbitration against them and that his private lawsuit was merely an effort to get attention and put pressure on them to resolve the civil dispute.

Senior Advocate P Vijaya Bhanu, together with Advocates Thomas J. Anakkalunkal, Anupa Anna Jose Kandoth, Jayaraman S., Dhanya Synny, Ann Milka George, and Sherin Rachel Santhosh, represented the petitioners.

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