

Absentee owners, easy targets: Punjab & Haryana high court flags rising property fraud against NRIs in Punjab

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Chandigarh: The Punjab and Haryana high court has observed that a disturbing trend is steadily gaining ground, wherein unscrupulous individuals are defrauding non-resident Indians (NRIs), particularly those who are unable to visit India frequently or manage their properties. According to the court, the gravity of such acts extends far beyond individual transactions, as they corrode institutional credibility and social conscience.

"Time and again, such vulnerable property owners are defrauded through forged documents, misuse of powers of attorney often resulting in sale of their properties at grossly undervalued rates. The scale of this deceit is symptomatic of systemic abuse, where

absence is weaponised and legal safeguards are routinely undermined," Justice Harpreet Singh Brar of the high court has observed.

Justice Brar passed these orders while dismissing the anticipatory bail plea of two people booked by the economic offence wing of vigilance bureau.

In this case, a sale deed of prime land near Ladhowal-Verka bypass in Ludhiana district, had been executed on Feb 11, 2025, between Deep Singh (seller) and Deepak Goel of Panchkula (buyer) at a cost of Rs 30 lakh whereas its market value was around Rs 6 crore. However, it was found that the actual owner, also named Deep Singh, had been residing in the US, while an imposter had appeared at the tehsil office for registration.

A tehsildar and other govt employees were also arrested in this case.

Dismissing anticipatory bail of petitioners, including numberdar Bagel Singh, who was witnessed to the forged sale deed, Justice Brar observed that these offences are rooted in a breach of trust and stand on a different pedestal than conventional criminal offences in terms of criminal jurisprudence as they not only impact the personal and financial security of the victims, but also have cascading effects on public trust in the real estate ecosystem, and ultimately, the economic stability of the state. "Therefore, this court cannot afford to treat such cases lightly while considering the grant of bail," the court held, dismissing the bail pleas of petitioners.

Even during the hearing of the matter, the state counsel had submitted that the petitioners are part of a well-orchestrated gang which identified the properties of NRIs and thereafter, by producing impersonators, created third-party rights by executing sham sale deeds.

QUOTE

'Symptomatic of systemic abuse'

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Justice Harpreet Singh Brar | Punjab & Haryana high court