

Law officer in custody in Chandigarh's cash-for-judge scam

A former additional advocate general of Haryana, Sanjeev Bansal, was in the custody of the Chandigarh Police Wednesday in a cash-for-judge scam that rocked the city last week.

The police said they arrested the former law officer, who is known to be well connected to politicians and judges, when he came to the Sector 11 police station here after 2 a.m. accompanied by some senior advocates.

Bansal, whose supporters say he surrendered to the police, is one of three accused in a case registered in Chandigarh Sunday after a packet with Rs.1.5 million in cash reached the house of newly appointed Punjab and Haryana high court judge Nirmaljit Kaur in Sector 11 here last week.

'Sanjeev did not surrender before us. Rather he was brought to us by some advocates and arrested by us. We cannot divulge anything more as this is a very sensitive issue and requires thorough investigation,' Additional Superintendent of Police Madhur Verma told IANS.

According to the complaint, an assistant (Munshi) of Bansal, Prakash, delivered the money at the residence of Nirmaljit Kaur, a sitting judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Aug 13 night.

On seeing the cash in the bag, the security guard called the judge who was in the house. They stopped Parkash from leaving and called the police, said a police official.

The Chandigarh Police had registered a case last week against three people, including Bansal and Prakash, following a complaint that cash had been delivered at Nirmaljit Kaur's residence, said the official.

'We registered a case under the Prevention of Corruption Act against Bansal, his munshi Parkash and a Delhi-based hotelier, Ravinder Singh,' said Verma.

'The police arrested Parkash for further questioning Aug 16, but Sanjeev Bansal and Ravinder absconded,' Verma said.

Bansal, 43, who is close to many senior Congress politicians and bureaucrats, was appointed additional advocate general when the Bhupinder Singh Hooda's government came to power in Haryana in 2005.

He resigned from the post of additional advocate general Monday after he was booked by the police. The Hooda government was embarrassed that his name figured in the cash-for-judge scam.

Punjab and Haryana High Court chief justice Tirath Singh Thakur is seized of the matter.

Parkash told the police that Bansal sent him to deliver the money and that the money had come from Delhi. Bansal claimed the money was to be given to a property dealer Nirmal Singh in Sector 18 and not to the judge.

However, investigating officers found that Bansal had spoken to some high court judges before and after the money episode last week.

Pankaj Bhardwaj, a lawyer at whose residence the money was allegedly to be delivered, said he did not know anything about the money deal.

'I do not know anything about the money involved in the case. Sanjeev Bansal had called me and said that he was sending some property documents for my scrutiny. He did not say anything about the money.'

The Chandigarh Police are tightlipped about the source of money and the telephone calls made by Sanjeev Bansal. It is believed that many top officials are involved in this case.

Parkash, who was a Home Guard volunteer with the Chandigarh Police, was arrested Aug 16. He was produced in court Tuesday. His police remand has been extended to three more days, said the official.

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