



*Crl.M.P.(MD)No.15670 of 2025
in Crl.A.(MD)No.239 of 2025*

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

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Reserved on : 06.11.2025

Pronounced on : 27.11.2025

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE K.MURALI SHANKAR

CRL MP(MD) No.15670 of 2025

in

CRL A(MD) No.239 of 2025

S.Murugan

**Petitioner/
Appellant**

Vs

The State of Tamil Nadu represented by
The Inspector of Police,
Aranthangi Police Station,
Pudukottai District.
(Crime No.442 of 2014)

**Respondent/
Complainant**

Prayer in CRL MP(MD).15670 of 2025 : This Criminal Miscellaneous Petition filed under Section 430(2) B.N.S.S., praying to suspend the sentence imposed upon the petitioner in C.C.No.07 of 2015 dated 21.11.2024 by the learned Additional District and Sessions Judge / Presiding Officer, Special Court for EC & NDPS Act Cases, Pudukottai, pending disposal of the criminal appeal in Crl.A. (MD)No.239 of 2025, and enlarge him on bail.



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Prayer in CRL A(MD).239 of 2025 : This Criminal Appeal filed under Section 415 B.N.S.S., praying to allow the above appeal and call for the records set aside the conviction and sentence passed by judgment dated 21.11.2024 in C.C.No.07 of 2015 in Crime No.442 of 2014 of Additional District and Sessions Judge / Presiding Officer, Special Court for NDPS Act cases, Pudukottai and acquit the appellant herein of all the charges.

For Petitioner: Mr.T.Lenin Kumar, Advocate

For Respondent: Mr.B.Thanga Aravindh,
Government Advocate (Criminal Side)

ORDER

This Criminal Miscellaneous Petition has been filed to suspend the sentence imposed on the petitioner / sole accused by the learned Additional District and Sessions Judge, Special Court for EC and NDPS Act Cases, Pudukkottai, in C.C.No.07 of 2015 dated 21.11.2024, till the disposal of the criminal appeal.

2. The case of the prosecution is that on 06.09.2014 at about 15.00 hours, upon receipt of the secret information from her informer, the Sub Inspector of Police, Aranthangi Police Station informed the same to her superior officers and went to near Railway Bridge, MGR Nagar, Aranthangi along with team and the informant identified the petitioner and on search, they found that the petitioner was carrying a white color plastic jute bag containing 1.500 kgs of Ganja and the



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police party, after seizing the contraband, arrested the petitioner and on that basis, FIR came to be registered in Crime No.442 of 2014 for the alleged offence under Section 8(c) r/w 20(b)(ii)(B) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (hereinafter referred as 'NDPS') Act.

3. The respondent police, after completing the investigation, has filed the final report and the case was taken on file in C.C.No.07 of 2015 and the same was pending on the file of the Special Court for EC and NDPS Act Cases, Pudukkottai.

4. During trial, the prosecution examined 4 witnesses as P.W.1 to P.W.4, exhibited 7 documents as Ex.P.1 to Ex.P.7 and marked 3 material objects as M.O.1 to M.O.III. The defence adduced neither oral nor documentary evidence.

5. The learned trial Judge, upon considering the evidence both oral and documentary and on hearing the arguments of both the sides, passed the impugned judgment dated 21.11.2024 convicting the petitioner for the offence under Section 8(c) r/w 20(b)(ii)(B) of the NDPS Act and sentenced him to undergo rigorous imprisonment for 2 years and to pay a fine of Rs.1,000/-, in default to undergo



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rigorous imprisonment for 3 weeks. Aggrieved by the impugned judgment of conviction and sentence, the accused has preferred the present appeal along with the above miscellaneous petition for suspension of sentence.

6. Notably, the petitioner's earlier petition for suspension of sentence in Crl.M.P.(MD)No.2375 of 2025 was dismissed as withdrawn by this Court vide order dated 24.02.2025.

7. Heard the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner and the learned Government Advocate (Criminal Side) appearing for the respondent police.

8. The learned counsel appearing for the petitioner would submit that the respondent police has not followed the mandatory provisions under the NDPS Act and no clinching materials were available with the prosecution to prove the manner in which the seizure has been effected and that there is no corroboration between the evidence of prosecution witnesses. He would further contend that the petitioner is in jail from the date of judgment i.e., from 21.11.2024 and he was also in jail for 25 days (from 07.09.2014 to 01.10.2014) during the period of



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investigation.

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9. The learned counsel appearing for the petitioner would submit that though the petitioner was awarded with 2 years rigorous imprisonment, he has already crossed the half of the imposed sentence and that therefore, the petitioner is entitled to get bail under Section 436-A Cr.P.C. and relied on the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Satender Kumar Antil Vs. Central Bureau of Investigation and another*** reported in ***2022 LiveLaw (SC) 577***.

10. The learned Government Advocate (Criminal Side) appearing for the respondent police would submit that the entire contraband was recovered from the petitioner, that the learned trial Judge, considering the evidence available on record, has held that the respondent police had complied with all the necessary mandatory requirements, that the learned trial Judge has rightly convicted the petitioner, that the petitioner was having 29 previous cases, that there is a difference between grant of bail under Section 439 Cr.P.C. in pre-trial stage and suspension of sentence under Section 389 Cr.P.C. for grant of bail post conviction and that since the provision under Section 436-A Cr.P.C. is not applicable to the



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petitioner, his application is liable to be dismissed.

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11. This Court had an occasion to consider the similar aspects in ***Crl.M.P. (MD)No.4681 of 2023 in Crl.A.(MD)No.315 of 2022 dated 11.07.2023*** and the relevant passages are extracted hereunder:-

“8. The learned Special Public Prosecutor for NCB Cases appearing for the respondent would submit that there is a difference between grant of bail under Section 439 Cr.P.C. in pre-trial stage and suspension of sentence under Section 389 Cr.P.C. for grant of bail, post conviction, that grant of suspension of sentence, after conviction, is a discretionary relief and the same has to be decided based on the nature and gravity of the offence and other facts and circumstances of the case and that though appeal is considered to be continuation of the trial, the presumption of innocence is not applicable after conviction, particularly in the cases under NDPS Act.

9. The learned Special Public Prosecutor for NCB Cases appearing for the respondent would further submit that grant of bail under Section 436-A Cr.P.C. is not an absolute one, that the first proviso clause clearly indicates that after hearing the Public Prosecutor, the Court may order the continued detention of person for a period longer than one half of the said period by recording



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its reason in writing and that the twin conditions contemplated under Section 37 of NDPS Act has not been satisfied by the petitioners.

*10. The learned Special Public Prosecutor for NCB Cases appearing for the respondent would further submit that the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Dadu alias Tulsidas Vs. State of Maharashtra** reported in (2000) 8 SCC 437 has specifically held that the power to suspend the sentence under Section 32A is subject to Section 37 of NDPS Act and he has also relied on the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Narcotic Control Bureau Vs. Lokesh Chadha** reported in 2021 SCC Online SC 178,*

*“9.Where the trial has ended in an order of conviction, the High Court, when a suspension of sentence is sought under Section 389(1) of CrPC, must be duly cognizant of the fact that a finding of guilt has been arrived at by the Trial Judge at the conclusion of the trial. This is not to say that the High Court is deprived of its power to suspend the sentence under Section 389(1) of CrPC. The High Court may do so for sufficient reasons which must have a bearing on the public policy underlying the incorporation of Section 37 of the NDPS Act. At this stage, we will refer to the decision of a two-Judge Bench of this Court in **Preet Pal Singh v State of Uttar Pradesh**³ where*



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Justice Indira Banerjee, speaking for the Court, observed as follows:

*“35. There is a difference between grant of bail under Section 439 of the CrPC in case of pre-trial arrest and suspension of sentence under Section 389 of the CrPC and grant of bail, post-conviction. In the earlier case there may be presumption of innocence, which is a fundamental postulate of criminal jurisprudence, and the courts may be liberal, depending on the facts and circumstances of the case, on the principle that bail is the rule and jail is an exception, as held by this Court in *Dataram Singh v. State of U.P. and Anr.* (supra).*

However, in case of post- conviction bail, by suspension of operation of the sentence, there is a finding of guilt and the question of presumption of innocence does not arise. Nor is the principle of bail being the rule and jail an exception attracted, once there is conviction upon trial. Rather, the Court considering an application for suspension of sentence and grant of bail, is to consider the prima facie merits of the appeal, coupled with other factors. There should be strong compelling reasons for grant of bail, notwithstanding an order of conviction, by suspension of sentence, and this strong and compelling reason must be recorded in the order granting bail, as mandated in Section 389(1) of the Cr.P.C.”



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10. *The principles which must guide the grant of bail in a case under the NDPS Act have been reiterated in several decisions of this Court and we may refer to the decision in State of Kerala v Rajesh⁴. The High Court unfortunately, in the present case, has not applied its mind to the governing provisions of the NDPS 3 (2020) 8 SCC 645 4 (2020) 12 SCC 122 Act. On the basis of the material which emerged before the learned Special Judge and which forms the basis of the order of conviction, we are of the view that no case for suspension of sentence under Section 389(1) of CrPC was established. The order granting suspension of sentence under Section 389(1) of CrPC is unsustainable and would accordingly have to be set aside.”*

11. *At this juncture, it is necessary to refer the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Satender Kumar Antil's** case, mainly relied on by the learned counsel appearing for the petitioners, wherein, the Hon'ble Apex Court has held that the word 'trial' will have to be given an expanded meaning, particularly when an appeal or admission is pending and the relevant passages are extracted hereunder:-*

“46. Section 436A of the Code has been inserted by Act 25 of 2005. This provision has got a laudable object behind it, particularly from the point of view of granting bail. This



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provision draws the maximum period for which an undertrial prisoner can be detained. This period has to be reckoned with the custody of the accused during the investigation, inquiry and trial. We have already explained that the word 'trial' will have to be given an expanded meaning particularly when an appeal or admission is pending. Thus, in a case where an appeal is pending for a longer time, to bring it under Section 436A, the period of incarceration in all forms will have to be reckoned, and so also for the revision.

47. Under this provision, when a person has undergone detention for a period extending to one-half of the maximum period of imprisonment specified for that offense, he shall be released by the court on his personal bond with or without sureties. The word 'shall' clearly denotes the mandatory compliance of this provision. We do feel that there is not even a need for a bail application in a case of this nature particularly when the reasons for delay are not attributable against the accused. We are also conscious of the fact that while taking a decision the public prosecutor is to be heard, and the court, if it is of the view that there is a need for continued detention longer than one-half of the said period, has to do so. However, such an exercise of power is expected to be undertaken sparingly being an exception to the general rule. Once again, we have to reiterate that 'bail is the rule and jail is an exception' coupled



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with the principle governing the presumption of innocence. We have no doubt in our mind that this provision is a substantive one, facilitating liberty, being the core intendment of Article 21. The only caveat as furnished under the Explanation being the delay in the proceeding caused on account of the accused to be excluded. This court in Bhim Singh v. Union of India, (2015) 13 SCC 605, while dealing with the aforesaid provision, has directed that:

“5. Having given our thoughtful consideration to the legislative policy engrafted in Section 436-A and large number of undertrial prisoners housed in the prisons, we are of the considered view that some order deserves to be passed by us so that the undertrial prisoners do not continue to be detained in prison beyond the maximum period provided under Section 436-A. 6. We, accordingly, direct that jurisdictional Magistrate/Chief Judicial Magistrate/Sessions Judge shall hold one sitting in a week in each jail/prison for two months commencing from 1-10-2014 for the purposes of effective implementation of Section 436-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In its sittings in jail, the above judicial officers shall identify the undertrial prisoners who have completed half period of the maximum period or maximum period of imprisonment provided for the said offence under the law and after complying with the procedure prescribed



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under Section 436-A pass an appropriate order in jail itself for release of such undertrial prisoners who fulfil the requirement of Section 436-A for their release immediately. Such jurisdictional Magistrate/Chief Judicial Magistrate/Sessions Judge shall submit the report of each of such sittings to the Registrar General of the High Court and at the end of two months, the Registrar General of each High Court shall submit the report to the Secretary General of this Court without any delay. To facilitate compliance with the above order, we direct the Jail Superintendent of each jail/prison to provide all necessary facilities for holding the court sitting by the above judicial officers. A copy of this order shall be sent to the Registrar General of each High Court, who in turn will communicate the copy of the order to all Sessions Judges within his State for necessary compliance.”

*12. The learned Special Public Prosecutor for NCB Cases appearing for the respondent has relied on the decision of the Full Bench of Bombay High Court in **Maksud Sheikh Gaffur Sheikh Vs. State of Maharashtra** reported in **2020 SCC Online Bom 878** and argued that the Full Bench has interpreted Section 436-A Cr.P.C. and concluded that the intention of the legislature to confer the benefit under Section 436-A is for the under-trial prisoners and not for the convicts.*



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13. No doubt, the Full Bench has answered the reference that a convict, who has challenged his conviction under Section 374 of the Code, is not entitled to the benefit of Section 436-A of the Code.

14. As rightly pointed out by the learned counsel appearing for the petitioners, in the said Full Bench judgment, the then Chief Justice of Bombay High Court has expressed his view separately and in that it has been stated that the spirit of Section 436-A Cr.P.C. could be considered by an appellate Court while it is seized of an application under Section 389 Cr.P.C. and, drawing inspiration from the principle ingrained in the former, to suspend execution of the sentence bearing in mind all relevant factors including the time likely to be taken for disposal of the appeal and that the judicial mind in the wise exercise of discretion and by suitable moderation may suspend execution of the sentence and grant bail under Section 389 Cr.P.C., the absence of a provision like Section 436-A Cr.P.C. in the chapter on appeals notwithstanding.

15. The learned Special Public Prosecutor for NCB Cases appearing for the respondent has also relied on the judgment of the Kerala High Court in **Midlaj Vs. Union of India** represented by **National Investigation Agency** reported in **2023 SCC Online Ker 998**, wherein, the Kerala High Court has referred the



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judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Satender Kumar Antil's case**. As rightly pointed out by the learned Special Public Prosecutor, the Kerala High Court has stated that in **Satender Kumar Antil's case**, the Hon'ble Apex Court made it clear that all the discussions along with the directions in that case, were meant to act as guidelines, as each case pertaining to a bail application is obviously to be decided on its own merits. In that case, the appellants/accused therein had acted as against the interest of the nation as they wanted to wage war against Syria, an Asiatic power at peace with the Government of India and hence, the High Court came to the decision that though appellants have undergone major portion of the sentence imposed on them, it is not safe to release them on bail, as we do not know whether they still entertain the idea of performing Hijra to Syria for indulging in violent jihad.

16. The learned counsel appearing for the petitioners has relied on the judgment of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court in **Mudassir Hussain and another Vs. State and another** reported in **2020 SCC Online J&K 381**, wherein, taking note Section 497-D of the Jammu and Kashmir Code of Criminal Procedure (1933 A.D) as obtaining prior to coming into force of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, states that where a person has during the period of investigation, inquiry or trial under the Code or an offence under any law undergone detention for a period extended up to



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one half of the maximum period of imprisonment specified for that offence under that law he shall be released by the court on his personal bond with or without sureties, but that the rider of the person got detained longer than one half of the said period if the court records reasons for the same in writing, that Section 436-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 is para-materia to Section 497-D of the Code and that since the appeal is continuation of trial and that since the appellants were admittedly undergone more than half of the sentence awarded to them, they are entitled to get the relief of suspension of sentence.

*17. Recently, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Mohd. Muslim alias Hussain Vs. State (NCT of Delhi)** reported in 2023 SCC Online SC 352, by referring the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Satender Kumar Antil's case**, has observed,*

*“16. In the most recent decision, **Satender Kumar Antil v. Central Bureau of Investigation**¹⁶ prolonged incarceration and inordinate delay engaged the attention of the court, which considered the correct approach towards bail, with respect to several enactments, including Section 37 NDPS Act. The court expressed the opinion that Section 436A¹⁷ (which requires inter alia the accused to be enlarged on bail if the trial is not concluded within specified periods) of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 would apply:*

“We do not wish to deal with individual enactments as each



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special Act has got an objective behind it, followed by the rigour imposed. The general principle governing delay would apply to these categories also. To make it clear, the provision contained in Section 436-A of the Code would apply to the Special Acts also in the absence of any specific provision. For example, the rigour as provided under Section 37 of the NDPS Act would not come in the way in such a case as we are dealing with the liberty of a person. We do feel that more the rigour, the quicker the adjudication ought to be. After all, in these types of cases number of witnesses would be very less and there may not be any justification for prolonging the trial. Perhaps there is a need to comply with the directions of this Court to expedite the process and also a stricter compliance of Section 309 of the Code.”

....

*20. The standard to be considered therefore, is one, where the court would look at the material in a broad manner, and reasonably see whether the accused's guilt may be proved. The judgments of this court have, therefore, emphasized that the satisfaction which courts are expected to record, i.e., that the accused may not be guilty, is only prima facie, based on a reasonable reading, which does not call for meticulous examination of the materials collected during investigation (as held in *Union of India v. Rattan Malik*¹⁹). Grant of bail on*



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ground of undue delay in trial, cannot be said to be fettered by Section 37 of the Act, given the imperative of Section 436A which is applicable to offences under the NDPS Act too (ref. Satender Kumar Antil supra). Having regard to these factors the court is of the opinion that in the facts of this case, the appellant deserves to be enlarged on bail.”

*18. In **Satender Kumar Antil's** case, as already pointed out, the Hon'ble Apex Court went to the extent of saying that the provision contained in Section 436-A of the Code would also apply to the Special Acts and that the rigor as provided under Section 37 of the NDPS Act would not come in the way in such a case as we are dealing with the liberty of a person.*

*19. It is pertinent to note that the Full Bench of Bombay High Court has delivered its judgment on 28.08.2020, but the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Satender Kumar Antil's** case has decided on 11.07.2022.*

20. In the case on hand, as already pointed out, the petitioners were in prison from 09.01.2018 and as such, they had already undergone more than half of the sentence imposed on them.”

12. By holding so, this Court, by observing that the petitioners therein had



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already undergone more than half of the sentence imposed on them, passed an order suspending the sentence imposed on them.

13. The learned counsel appearing for the petitioner would rely on a recent decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Narcotic Control Bureau Vs. Lakhwinder Singh*** reported in ***2025 LiveLaw (SC) 191*** and the relevant passages are extracted hereunder:-

“7. At this stage, the learned ASG appearing for the petitioner submitted that the power of the Court was constrained by Section 37 of the NDPS Act, which is applicable even at the stage of an appeal. He relies upon a decision of this Court in the case of Dadu vs. State of Maharashtra. There is no dispute about the fact that the Appellate Court is bound by constraints of Section 37 of the NDPS Act while considering the prayer for the grant of bail during the pendency of an appeal. However, if, in the facts of the case, an accused has undergone a substantial part of the substantive sentence and, considering the pendency of criminal appeals, his appeal is not likely to be heard before the accused undergoes the entire sentence, the Appellate Court can exercise the power of releasing the accused on bail pending the appeal. If the relief of bail is denied in such a factual situation only on the grounds of Section 37 of the NDPS Act, it will amount to the



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violation of the rights of the accused under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

8. In this case, the appeal preferred by the respondent is not likely to be heard before he undergoes the entire sentence. He has already undergone a substantial part of his 10-year sentence. Therefore, there is no reason to interfere with the impugned order in the facts of the case. The Appeal is, accordingly, dismissed. However, if the respondent misuses the liberty granted to him under the impugned order, the appellant can always apply for cancellation of bail.”

14. It is also necessary to refer the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Atul Alias Ashutosh Vs. State of Madhya Pradesh*** reported in (2024) 3 SCC 663 relied on by the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner and the relevant passages are extracted hereunder:-

“2.Out of fixed term sentence of five years, the appellant-accused has already undergone half of the sentence. The appeal against conviction of the year 2022 is not likely to reach before he completes the entire sentence. Hence, a case is made out for grant of suspension of sentence pending the appeal and grant of bail. For that purpose, the appellant shall be produced before the trial court within a period of one week from today.



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3. The trial court shall enlarge the appellant on bail on appropriate terms and conditions till the final disposal of the appeal before the High Court.

4. Before parting with order, we must note here that notwithstanding several decisions of this Court holding that when there is a fixed term sentence and especially when the appeal is not likely to be heard before completing entire period of sentence, normally suspension of sentence and bail should be granted, we find that in several deserving cases, bail is being denied. Such cases should never be required to be brought before this Court.”

15. The learned counsel appearing for the petitioner would submit that out of 29 cases, 22 cases were already disposed of with levy of fine.

16. It is pertinent to note that during investigation, the petitioner was in jail for 25 days and thereafter, he was sent to prison on 21.11.2024 i.e., on the date of judgment and is in prison till now.

17. Considering the above facts and circumstances, taking note of the guidelines issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Satender Kumar Antil's** case



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and also the fact that the petitioner had already undergone more than half of the sentence imposed on him, this Court is inclined to suspend the sentence imposed on the petitioner.

18. In the result, this Criminal Miscellaneous Petition is allowed. Accordingly, the relief of suspension of sentence and bail is granted to the petitioner on the following conditions:-

(i) The petitioner shall execute a bond for a sum of ***Rs.1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh only)*** with two sureties each for a like sum to the satisfaction of the Additional District and Sessions Judge / Presiding Officer, EC & NDPS Act cases, Pudukottai;

(ii) The sureties shall affix their photographs and Left Thumb Impression in the surety bond and the trial Court may obtain a copy of their Aadhar card or Bank Pass Book to ensure their identity; and

(iii) The petitioner shall appear before the trial Court on all working days at 10.30 a.m., until further orders and if he is not able to appear before the trial Court on any day, he shall make arrangements to file an application under Section 317 of Cr.P.C. and shall appear before the trial Court on any other day in lieu of the date of his absence, as directed by the trial Court.

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To

- 1.The Additional District Judge,
Special Court for EC and NDPS Act cases,
Pudukkottai.
- 2.The Superintendent,
Central Prison,
Tiruchirappalli.
- 3.The Inspector of Police,
Aranthangi Police Station,
Pudukottai District.
- 4.The Additional Public Prosecutor,
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court,
Madurai.