



**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
BENCH AT AURANGABAD**

ANTICIPATORY BAIL APPLICATION NO. 1659 OF 2025

SURAJ GORAKH BIKKAD

VERSUS

THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA

...

Advocate for Applicant : Mr. Ashok Tapse and
Mr. P.D. Surywanshi

GP for Respondents/State : Mr. A. B. Girase

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CORAM : MEHROZ K. PATHAN, J.

Date of Reserving the Order : 22nd DECEMBER 2025

Date of Pronouncing the Order : 12th JANUARY 2026

ORDER :

1. The Applicant has approached this Court, seeking anticipatory bail in connection with Crime No.453/2025 registered with Ambad Police Station, District Jalna for the offences punishable under Sections 316(4), 316(5), 318(4), 324(5), 336(3), 338, 340(2), 339, 238, 3(5) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and Sections 52 and 53 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

2. The First Information Report was filed by one Vilas Komatwar, stating that he had received a letter from the Sub Divisional Officer, Ambad, dated 18.08.2025. The letter informed him that the Three-Member Committee had submitted a report

regarding the natural calamity compensation disbursement fraud committed by accused persons at Ambad and Ghansavangi Taluka, and authorized him to register an FIR against those found responsible in the said report.

3. It is alleged that the State Government declared compensation for farmers whose agricultural fields were affected by natural calamities during the years 2022, 2023, and 2024, including floods, heavy rainfall, unseasonal rainfall, drought, etc., to be disbursed to the affected farmers. Several complaints were received at the Collector Office, Jalna, pertaining to the disbursement of natural calamity compensation at the Tahsil Offices of Ambad and Ghansavangi. The complaints mentioned the role of the Village Revenue Officer, Gram Sevak, and Agricultural Assistant, who allegedly colluded with each other to disburse compensation to bogus farmers who were not eligible for such benefits. In some cases, compensation was disbursed to farmers who were not residents of the village, including villagers from other Talukas and Districts. Agricultural fields of lesser measurement were shown with inflated areas by forging the 7/12 extracts and by falsely showing fruit-bearing trees on barren land. Some beneficiaries were allotted compensation twice. Taking into consideration the aforesaid complaints, the Collector, Jalna, under his supervision, formed a Three-Member Committee on 28.01.2025.

The said Committee conducted a detailed inquiry into the complaints and submitted its report. In the FIR, 28 persons were named, along with certain other unnamed persons who had acted in collusion and misused the login ID of the Tahsildar and committed fraud/misappropriation by disbursing compensation to persons not entitled to receive the same. In some cases, even Government lands were wrongly shown in forged 7/12 extracts of villagers, thereby obtaining disaster relief compensation through conspiracy by all the accused persons acting together thereby cheating the Government.

. Apart from the aforesaid two talukas, Ambad and Ghansavangi, six Revenue Officers of the Tahsil Office, Ambad, were also named who have colluded with the Village Revenue Officer/Talathi and certain bogus beneficiaries, conspiring to commit misappropriation with the intention of causing wrongful loss to the Government and wrongful gain to themselves, thereby cheating the Government. One of the Revenue Officers in the Collector Office, Jalna, namely Mr. Dinesh Barad, was held responsible for misusing the login ID and password of the Tahsildar, Ambad. He allegedly connived with the other accused persons and further provoked and instigated them to commit the said crime. It is also alleged in the FIR that after getting knowledge that an inquiry was being conducted into the fraud committed in the disbursement of natural calamity compensation,

the accused persons destroyed the necessary evidence and the files in the computers maintained by the Officers were deleted, which could have assisted to prove their guilt. The three email ID's of the Tahasil Office namely tahambad@gmail.com; tahghan@gmail.com and tahghananudan@gmail.com were tampered with by all accused persons and thereafter the evidence were destroyed.

. Thus the aforesaid 28 persons and others are found to have committed the misappropriation to the tune of Rs.24,90,77,811/- by forging the documents and cheating the Government and thereafter destroying the evidence. The complainant therefore prayed for appropriate action against all the accused persons. Thus the present FIR alleges that the Talathis/Revenue Officers, Gram Sevaks, and Agricultural Assistants caused wrongful loss to the Government and wrongful gain to themselves by fabricating certain documents, inserting bogus names of farmers, and disbursing compensation amounts to such bogus farmers. The FIR further alleges that compensation was transferred to fake and ineligible beneficiaries.

4. Heard the learned Counsel Mr. Tapse alongwith Assisting Counsel and the learned Government Pleader Mr. Girase. I have gone through the documents relied upon by the learned Counsel for the Applicant and also gone through the investigation papers

made available by the learned Government Pleader.

5. The learned Counsel for the Applicant submits that the Applicant has been falsely implicated in the FIR. It was the responsibility of the Tahsildar to implement the said scheme. The login ID was solely under the control of the Tahsildar, and the Applicant is being made a scapegoat only to shield the higher officers. The Tahsildar himself is not made an accused who have used the said login id and password to clear the disbursement to the alleged bogus farmers without verifying the authenticity of such farmer whether he is entitled to receive such compensation.

6. It is submitted by the learned Counsel for the Applicant that he was working as a Talathi at Sajjakandhari, Ambad Taluka, Ghansavangi, District Jalna, with effect from 30.08.2021, and that he has a clean and unblemished record, with no complaints from the villagers regarding his conduct.

It is further submitted by the learned Counsel for the that the Government has formulated a scheme for granting compensation to field owners for losses incurred due to natural calamities, through various Government Resolutions issued between 2022 and 2024. The Applicant acted in accordance with the directions and guidance of the Tahsildar, Ghansavangi. The details of the beneficiaries, including their respective 7/12 extracts,

Aadhaar numbers, and bank account details, were submitted via email and in soft copy. The Tahsildar, Ghansavangi, verified the data, and after such verification at his office, the same was forwarded to the Collector's Office, Jalna. The Collector's Office, Jalna, scrutinized the data, and only thereafter the compensation amount was transferred directly into the farmers' accounts under the Government's Direct Benefit Transfer scheme. The amounts being directly transferred in the accounts of the farmers, there is no role of the present Applicant who was working as Talathi in receiving such compensation. Thus as the compensation itself is not received by the Applicant, the Applicant cannot be said to be an accused in the said crime. The farmers who have received the compensation are not added as accused and are being protected for the reasons known to the Tahsildar and the Collector. The details submitted by the Applicant, are obtained from the villagers/agriculturists who have themselves forwarded such details after opening an account in their names in the concerned bank. The Collector Jalna constituted a three-member committee and recommended strict action against 102 persons, including Talathis, Agricultural Assistants, and Gram Sevaks. However, out of these 102 persons, only 28 have been added as accused in the FIR. No details have been furnished to the Applicant regarding the quantum of misappropriated amount, nor has any data been provided to the Applicant. It is submitted that there were technical glitches in the

software, for which the Applicant cannot be held responsible. The Applicant was issued a show cause notice by the office of the Deputy Collector, Jalna, dated 10.06.2025. In response, the Applicant submitted an explanation dated 13.06.2025, clarifying that due to certain technical reasons, the compensation amount was disbursed twice. It was further informed that such excess amounts have been recovered by the Applicant and credited to the Government. In the case of the Applicant, an amount of Rs.14,67,767/- has been recovered and duly credited to the Government. The Applicant would further assist the prosecution in recovering the remaining amount of misappropriation wrongly disbursed to the ineligible farmers, if protected by this Court.

7. It is also submitted by the learned Counsel for the Applicant that the Collector, Jalna, issued an order dated 03.07.2025 calling upon the Talathis of Ambad and Ghansavangi along with the relevant record. The Applicant submitted an application on 11.07.2025, explaining that the charge of villages Bhoggaon and Kandari (Ambad) was not with the Applicant, and therefore the amount shown as misappropriated against the Applicant is not proper. The Tahasildar, Revenue Office of the Collector, Jalna, accordingly directed the Inquiry Committee to verify the same and submit a report. The Applicant also annexed, along with the application, a chart showing the recovered amount

by the Applicant, which has already been deposited with the Government.

. Thus, it is submitted by the learned Counsel for the Applicant that the Applicant is a Government Officer and is not a flight risk. The Applicant was protected by the interim order dated 22.02.2025 passed by this Court. The Applicant has thereafter cooperated with the investigation, and there is no complaint that the Applicant has failed to cooperate with the investigation.

8. As against this, the learned Government Pleader opposes the application on the ground that the Applicant was working as a Talathi under the Tahasil Office, Ambad, for the villages Khalapuri, Bhoggaon, Kandari, Ambad, and Shevta. During the inquiry, it was found that the criminal misappropriation attributed to bogus beneficiaries, whose names were forwarded by the Applicant, amounts to Rs. 33.83 lakhs. Out of this, the Applicant has recovered Rs. 22.24 lakhs, which has been deposited with the Government as per the Inquiry Committee's report.

. The learned Government Pleader submits that, be that as it may, after registration of the FIR and during the course of investigation, the Investigating Officer recorded statements of witnesses which reveal that bogus farmers were inserted into the beneficiaries list. Some farmers were included twice, while in other cases their agricultural area was inflated to secure higher

compensation. Several beneficiaries have categorically stated that the Applicant had asked the villagers to open accounts despite their ineligibility, and inserted their names in the list. Even after receiving compensation, certain beneficiaries paid amounts to the Applicant, as demanded by him.

9. It is further submitted by the learned Government Pleader that the Applicant inserted names of villagers who did not even possess agricultural fields. Some of them were his near relatives and acquaintances, deliberately enlisted with the assurance that they would pay him commission after receiving compensation. The Gram Panchayat, Kandari, has issued a certificate stating that 13 beneficiaries shown as residents of Kandari are not residents of that village. Likewise, the Gram Panchayat, Shevta, has certified that 23 beneficiaries shown as residents of Shevta are not residents of that village.

. Thus, the role of the Applicant requires thorough investigation, which is not possible without custodial interrogation. The Applicant, along with other accused persons, has committed the aforesaid crime, resulting in huge misappropriation of Government funds. The magnitude of the crime is grave and requires thorough investigation. There are already allegations of Applicant tampering with the evidence and destroying files in the computers and emails of the Government and therefore there is

every likelihood that the Applicant if released on bail, may tamper with the evidence and thereby cause prejudice to the investigation.

10. I have also gone through the investigation papers made available for perusal of this Court. The perusal of the Government Resolution dated 17.11.2022 shows that the Government formulated a scheme for grant of compensation/aid to farmers who had incurred losses due to natural calamities, viz. shortfall of rainfall, heavy rainfall, floods, unseasonal rainfall, etc. The compensation was to be disbursed through the Tahsildar of the concerned Tahsils. The Tahsildar was entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the entire scheme and granting benefits to deserving and eligible farmers. The Government Resolutions dated 24.01.2023, 20.09.2024, and 18.05.2024 also laid down the procedures and formalities to be followed for disbursement of such compensation. Even it could be seen from the scheme formulated by the Government that even though Tahsildars were held responsible for implementation of the scheme, the ground Officers i.e. Village Revenue Officers/Gram Sevaks/Agricultural Assistants, Computer Operators, other Revenue Officers working in the office of Tahsil, were also equally responsible for uploading the names of rightful beneficiaries entitled for receiving such compensation. The Talathis, Revenue Officers, Gram Sevaks, and Agricultural Assistants were entrusted with the vital responsibility of collecting

data of eligible farmers who had incurred losses. The Agricultural Assistants were tasked with assessing the damage caused to the crops and trees of the farmers. The Gram Sevaks were responsible for providing the names of the farmers and confirming their identities as belonging to the village. The Tahsil Revenue Officers were given the responsibility of uploading the names of the concerned villagers along with other details such as Aadhaar cards and bank account information. Thus, the scheme placed equal responsibility on all these officers, who acted as ground officers in uploading the names of the eligible farmers. It cannot, therefore, be said that the Tahsildar alone was responsible for implementation of the scheme, and any misappropriation in the wrongful disbursement of compensation cannot be attributed to the Talathis/Village Revenue Officers.

11. It could be seen from the record that the list of the beneficiaries was to be first prepared and verified at the level of the present Applicant who was working as Talathi/Village Revenue Officer of villages, Khalapuri, Bhoggaon, Kandari, Ambad and Shevta. Three-Member Inquiry Committee's report, as well as the investigation papers, show that compensation was disbursed to several persons who were not residents of the villages mentioned in the list. Some of them were not even landholders, while others were found to be relatives and close acquaintances of the

Applicant. The statement of one Mukind Mule clearly implicates the role of the present Applicant, Suraj. He stated that he owned land admeasuring 38 H in Gut No. 359 at village Banegaon. The Applicant, who was working as Talathi, had shown an increased area of his agricultural field, depicted it as more irrigated land, and thereby wrongfully facilitated disbursement of Rs. 43,200/-. The witness further stated that he was asked by the Applicant to provide names of other persons along with their Aadhaar cards, and their names were included in the list even though they were not eligible for compensation. The names forwarded by the Applicant, while working as Talathi, were then uploaded on the portal by another accused, Ashish Patankar. The accused Ashish and Suraj were in continuous contact with each other for adding names of beneficiaries who were not entitled to receive compensation. These names were forwarded through WhatsApp or on a pen drive to Ashish Patankar, who was working in the Tahasil office. After learning that an inquiry was being conducted, the Applicant asked the witness to re-deposit the excess amount received by him with the Government. Accordingly, out of Rs. 43,200/-, the witness deposited Rs. 38,000/- and retained Rs. 5,200/-, which he was entitled to as per the actual area held by him in Survey No. 359. The remaining amount of 9 persons who were wrongly added has also been re-deposited by him. Another witness Sudarshan Jadhav had also stated about the role of the

present Applicant. The said witness further stated that even though his wife Chaitanya Jadhav was not having any agricultural field at Kandari Ambad, even the Applicant had shown her name in the beneficiary list and granted the compensation amount of Rs.40,800/-. After coming to know about the inquiry, out of the amount of Rs.40,800/- the Applicant has deposited the amount of Rs.19,400/- and returned back Rs.21000/- to the witness. There are certificates issued by Gram Panchayat office Kandari showing 13 persons who were granted benefits of compensation, were not even residents of village Kandari. Likewise, another certificate issued by the Gram Panchayat office, Shevta, shows that 23 persons who were not residents of the said village were nevertheless granted compensation benefits. The station diary entry of Ambad Police Station records that, after obtaining interim bail on 22.09.2025, the Applicant was called to attend the police station; however, the Applicant failed to do so and thus did not cooperate with the investigation. The names of 22 persons wrongly shown as residents of Shevta in the list uploaded by the Applicant, and 13 persons wrongly shown as residents of Kandari, have also been detailed by the respective Gram Panchayats. There is ample evidence indicating the involvement of the present Applicant. The Applicant used Aadhaar cards and bank passbooks of persons not entitled to compensation, luring them with promises of money. The allegations are serious in nature and pertain to an economic offence whereby

the Government has been defrauded of a huge amount, estimated at nearly Rs. 25 Crores.

12. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy v. Central Bureau of Investigation**, (2013) 7 SCC 439 and in the case of **Tarunkumar Vs. Assistant Director Directorate of Enforcement**, 2023 NSC 1006, was pleased to hold that the economic offences constitute a class apart and need to be visited with a different approach in the matter of bail. The economic offences having deep-rooted conspiracies and involving huge loss of public funds need to be viewed seriously and considered as a grave offences affecting the economy of the country as a whole and thereby posing serious threat to the financial health of the country.

13. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Nimmagadda Prasad vs C.B.I., Hyderabad**, (2013) 7 SCC 466, has held as under :

23. Unfortunately, in the last few years, the country has been seeing an alarming rise in white-collar crimes, which has affected the fibre of the country's economic structure. Incontrovertibly, economic offences have serious repercussions on the development of the country as a whole. In State of Gujarat v. Mohanlal Jitamalji Porwal [(1987) 2 SCC 364 : 1987 SCC (Cri) 364] this Court, while considering a request of the prosecution for adducing additional evidence, inter alia, observed as under:

"5. ... The entire community is aggrieved if the economic offenders who ruin the economy of the State are not brought to book. A murder may be committed in the heat of moment upon passions being aroused. An economic offence is committed with cool calculation and deliberate design with an eye on personal profit regardless of the consequence to

the community. A disregard for the interest of the community can be manifested only at the cost of forfeiting the trust and faith of the community in the system to administer justice in an even-handed manner without fear of criticism from the quarters which view white-collar crimes with a permissive eye unmindful of the damage done to the national economy and national interest."

14. The Applicant is alleged to have connived with other accused persons to misuse the login ID of the Tahsildar for making bogus payments to farmers. The Applicant failed to attend the police station, as noted in the station diary vide General Diary Entry No. 14 dated 01.10.2025 at 14:04 hours at Ambad Police Station. The custodial interrogation of the Applicant is necessary for proper investigation. The application is devoid of substance, and therefore I am not inclined to exercise discretion to grant anticipatory bail to the Applicant. Accordingly, the application is hereby rejected.

**MEHROZ K. PATHAN
JUDGE**

15. After pronouncement of the order rejecting the application, the learned Counsel for the Applicant submitted that the Applicant was granted interim protection by this Court, hence, the interim protection may be continued for a period of four weeks further to take appropriate steps.

16. The learned Public Prosecutor, Mr. A.B. Girase, strongly opposes to grant of any such prayer for continuation of the interim relief.

17. This Court has already observed in the accompanying order that the Applicant failed to co-operate with the investigation. Taking into consideration the gravity of offence, the request made by the Applicant is hereby rejected.

MEHROZ K. PATHAN
JUDGE

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