IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
BENCH AT AURANGABAD

ANTICIPATORY BAIL APPLICATION NO. 1886 OF 2025

RAMESHWAR NANA JADHAV
VERSUS
THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA AND ANOTHER

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Senior Advocate for Applicant : Mr. Rajendra Deshmukh i/by
Mr. Ramankumar Gopal Dodiya

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**

O R D E R :

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 r/w 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 to be disbursed whose agricultural fields were affected by natural calamities during the years 2022, 2023, and 2024, including floods, heavy rainfall, unseasonal rainfall, drought, etc. 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 forged 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 regarding 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 namely Ambad and Ghansavangi and six Revenue Officers of the Tahsil Office, Ambad, were also named who have colluded with the Village Revenue Officer/Talathi and other 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 and he also 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 Senior Counsel Mr. Rajendra Deshmukh alongwith Assisting Counsel and the learned Government Pleader Mr. Girase. I have gone through the documents relied upon by the learned Senior Counsel for the Applicant and also gone through the investigation papers made available by the learned Government Pleader.

5. The learned Senior Counsel Mr. Deshmukh for the Applicant submits that the Applicant was working as a Talathi and had no control over uploading of data, scrutiny, sanction, or disbursement. The role of the Applicant was confined merely to the collection of information in an excel sheet as per the prescribed format and submission of the same to the superior authorities, i.e., the Tahsildars and the SDOs. The final authority to approve and sanction the release of funds vested only in the Tahsildar, SDO, and the District Collector, who operated the MAHA-IT portal and transferred the funds through the direct beneficiary transfer system. The learned Senior Counsel further submits that the Applicant has cooperated in the inquiry conducted by the Three-Member Committee and has assisted in the recovery of Rs. 23,59,901/-, with only an amount of Rs. 3,80,158/- yet to be recovered. The amount so recovered has already been deposited in the Government's natural disaster relief fund immediately after issuance of the show cause notice. The Government Resolution dated 24.01.2023 prescribed the role of the Tahsildar as the sole custodian of the entire data and the only person responsible for implementation of the disbursement of compensation. The Applicant himself did not receive any amount personally in his account. The Applicant has assisted in the recovery, and there was no mens rea or intention on the part of the Applicant to commit the alleged act. The Inquiry Committee itself has concluded that there were several technical glitches in the software which led to errors such as double payments to a single farmer, payments without names in the 7/12 extract, and payments made to persons in whose name land was yet to be transferred. The Applicant is a Government Servant, and there is no possibility of his fleeing from the ends of justice. The Applicant has cooperated in the inquiry and is also ready to cooperate with the investigation. The prosecution has failed to make out a case that custodial interrogation of the Applicant is necessary, and therefore the Applicant may be released on bail.

. The Tahsildar Ambad has itself realized the mistake of including the name of the Applicant in connection with the misappropriation that occurred in the villages Alamgaon, Antarwada, and Aava, where one Santosh Jaiswal was given the responsibility of collecting the data. Hence, the Collector, vide communication dated 16.10.2025, directed deletion of the aforesaid villages from the name of the present Applicant, Rameshwar. Thus, it is evident that the Inquiry Committee itself had committed several errors, which were directed to be rectified by the Tahsildar, Ambad. The Inquiry Committee, having concluded that there were technical glitches in the software which led to the wrong disbursement of compensation, makes it clear that the Applicant cannot be held solely responsible for the uploading of the fictitious names.

6. As against this, the learned Government Pleader vehemently opposes the application on the ground that the Applicant was shown to have misappropriated an amount of Rs.38,28,974/-. The Applicant though have assisted to recover an amount of Rs.7,13,686/- however huge amount of Rs.31,15,288/- is yet to be recovered. The Applicant was given responsibility of preparing the list of beneficiaries. The Applicant has misused his position and has entered the names of persons who were entitled to receive compensation. Some of the villagers listed in the report are not even residents of the villages that suffered losses due to natural calamities. The Applicant is alleged to have prepared bogus 7/12 extract to claim the compensation and forwarded the list to be uploaded on the website. The prosecution has collected the bogus 7/12 extracts of 33 persons from village Badapur and 15 persons from Sadesawangi. The investigation is in further progress and there is likelihood of involvement of various other frauds committed by the Applicant in committing the crime.

. The Applicant was entrusted with the preparation and forwarding of lists of affected farmers from villages Alangaon, Antarwala Ava, Badapur, Ava, Sadesawangi, Rohilagad and Mardi. Instead of discharging his statutory duties honestly, the Applicant deliberately prepared bogus and duplicate beneficiary lists, falsely increased land area through manipulated records, and thereby facilitated the wrongful disbursement of public funds to ineligible persons. The total amount of embezzlement attributable to the Applicant is shown to be Rs.38.28 lakhs, out of which only a partial amount of Rs.7.13 lakhs has been deposited, which by itself does not absolve the applicant of criminal liability. The investigation has further revealed, through witness statements, that the applicant included the names of persons who were neither residents of the concerned villages nor owners of agricultural land. The statement of Bharat Ratan Tasewal categorically discloses that amounts were credited in the names of four such bogus beneficiaries from Kauchalwadi. These statements are corroborated by Gram Panchayat and Sarpanch certificates certifying that several beneficiaries were not residents and hence not eligible for compensation. It is also borne out from the record that the applicant, in conspiracy with co-accused and his subordinates, sent forged beneficiary lists through WhatsApp, bypassing the official procedure of submission through the designated government email ID. Further, the Inquiry Committee has unearthed that the applicant prepared and submitted fake 7/12 extracts to the Committee itself in order to suppress the actual extent of misappropriation. The forged land records, detailed village-wise, clearly indicate manipulation of official documents, which is a serious offence involving breach of public trust. The investigation also reveals a recurring modus operandi wherein the same bogus names were used repeatedly across different years (2022–2024) by exploiting loopholes in the portal, including multiple grants in the name of the same individual. This conduct reflects continuity, planning, and deliberate misuse of official position. The Applicant further failed to disclose the true identity of bogus beneficiaries when questioned by the Inquiry Committee and instead attempted to mislead the authorities by producing certificates showing alleged repayment. The investigation specifically records that the identities of several beneficiaries are yet to be traced and that the applicant's custodial interrogation is necessary to identify them and to recover further evidence.

. It is further submitted by the learned Government Pleader that considering the nature and gravity of the offence, the position of trust occupied by the applicant as a public servant, the large-scale financial loss to the State exchequer, the systematic falsification of official records, the use of digital platforms to execute the conspiracy, and the clear prima facie material emerging from witness statements and documentary evidence.

7. I have considered the submissions made by the learned Senior Counsel, Mr. Deshmukh, as well as the learned Government Pleader, Mr. Girase, and have also perused the investigation papers made available by Mr. Girase. A perusal of the investigation papers reveals that the Applicant has played a major role in the commission of the said crime. The Applicant was serving as a

Talathi in the Rohilgarh circle. The Three-Member Committee has attributed the misappropriation of Rs. 38,28,974/- to the Applicant. Although the Applicant has deposited an amount of Rs. 7,13,686/-, a substantial sum of Rs. 31.15 lakhs is yet to be recovered from him. The statement of one witness, Bharat Tasewal, indicates that the Applicant, while working as Talathi for the Rohilgarh circle, had asked the witness to provide the names of certain individuals along with their Aadhaar cards and bank passbooks, stating that compensation for natural calamity relief would be withdrawn in their names. Accordingly, Bharat Tasewal provided the names of his wife/Sheetal Tasewal; his sister-in-law/Deepa Tasewal; his brother-in-law/Mayur Pawar; and his mother-in-law/Sanjana Pawar, along with their Aadhaar cards and passbooks. After some days, the Applicant provided the said witness with the V.K. number list, and after conducting the KYC check, their names were inserted into the portal. Accordingly, an amount of Rs. 52,784/- was deposited into the account of Sheetal, Rs. 48,900/- into the account of Mayur Pawar, Rs. 40,124/- into the account of Sanjana Pawar, and Rs. 49,000/- into the account of Deepa.

. The investigation further shows that the names of 30 persons were provided by the Applicant to the arrested accused Sushil Jadhav for inclusion of their names in the beneficiaries list, even though they were not entitled to receive compensation. The Applicant is also alleged to have prepared bogus 7/12 extracts to claim the compensation and forward the list to be uploaded on the website. The Applicant has prepared bogus 7/12 extracts in the names of Jagdish Pralhad Charawande; Pralhad Shivsingh Charawande; Mayuri Madan Kale; Dankorbai Pralhad Charawande; Dipali Madan Kale; Surekha Mithusing Charawande; Dipa Ramprasad Tasewal; Sheetal Bharat Tasewal; Dipali Madan Kale; Geeta Ganesh Barwal; Mayuri Madan Kale; Ayush Bharat Tasewal; Shreedhar Jaynarayan Shingare; Anita Ganesh Barwal and Kamlabai Dulharsing Murhade from village Sadesawangi. Thus there are 15 bogus 7/12 extracts prepared by the Applicant for village Sadesawangi, whereas 33 bogus 7/12 extracts are prepared by the Applicant for village Badapur.

. The investigation shows that lists containing names of approximately 30 bogus beneficiaries were repeatedly circulated through WhatsApp, thereby demonstrating a deliberate and conscious attempt to evade scrutiny.

8. 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.

9. 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."*

10. The Applicant in connivance with all other accused persons has allegedly committed the misappropriation to the tune of Rs.25 Crores by using login ID of Tahsildar with the assistance of other accused persons. The statements recorded by the Investigating Officer during the course of investigation reveals the role of the present Applicant to be a prime suspect in the crime. The custodial interrogation of the Applicant would be thus necessary. Some of the amount initially shown as misappropriated by the Inquiry Committee has been allegedly recovered by the Applicant. However the investigation shows that the amount of misappropriation is likely to increase as the investigation is still going and the statements of the bogus farmers are being recorded. Thus there is every likelihood that the Applicant if released on bail, may cause prejudice to the investigation.

11. Thus taking into consideration the gravity and nature of economic offence, the Three Member Committee's report and the investigation papers which include statements of various beneficiaries, I am not inclined to exercise the discretion in favour of the present Applicant to grant anticipatory bail. The application is therefore rejected.

MEHROZ K. PATHAN
JUDGE

Najeeb.