IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
BENCH AT AURANGABAD

ANTICIPATORY BAIL APPLICATION NO. 2243 OF 2025

Shahadeo Mahadeo Nannaware
VERSUS
The State Of Maharashtra
…
WITH
ANTICIPATORY BAIL APPLICATION NO. 2256 OF 2025

Subhash Guruling Pisure
VERSUS
The State Of Maharashtra And Another
…
WITH
ANTICIPATORY BAIL APPLICATION NO. 2302 OF 2025

Pravin Bhagwanrao Rakh
VERSUS
The State Of Maharashtra And Another
…
AND
ANTICIPATORY BAIL APPLICATION NO. 61 OF 2026

Mrigesh Dinkarrao Narwadkar
(Ref. As Narwadkar in FIR)
VERSUS
The State Of Maharashtra And Another
…

- **Mr. V. D. Salunke,** *Advocate for Applicant in ABA No. 2243 of 2025*
- **Mr. Rajendrraa Deshmukkh,** *Senior Advocate i/by. Mr. Vishal Arjun Chavan, Advocate for Applicant in ABA No. 2256 of 2025*
- **Mr. R. G. Hange,** *Advocate for Applicant in ABA No. 2302 of 2025*
- **Mr. Kulkarni Mukul S.,** *Advocate for Applicant in ABA No. 61 of 2026*
- **Mr. A. B. Girase,** *Public Prosecutor for Respondents – State*

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CORAM : MEHROZ K. PATHAN, J.

DATED : 08.04.2026

PER COURT :

1. Anticipatory Bail Application No. 61 of 2026 is not on board. Upon mentioning, taken on board.

2. Heard learned counsel for the applicants, the learned APP for the respondent-State.

3. The applicants have approached this Court apprehending arrest in connection with FIR No. 0544 of 2025, dated 19.11.2025, registered at Shivajinagar Police Station, Taluka and District Beed. The FIR alleges offences punishable under Sections 7 and 13 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988; Sections 14 and 34 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996; and Sections 318(4), 316(5), 338, 336(3), 340(2), 198, 199, 316(2), 61, and 351(4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.

4. The case of the prosecution is that the complainant is serving as Deputy Collector, Land Acquisition, Beed. Pursuant to a letter issued by the District Collector, Beed dated 18.11.2025, and based on the findings of an Enquiry Committee, it was revealed that serious irregularities and large-scale fraud had been committed in land acquisition compensation proceedings, particularly those pertaining to National Highways projects. As per the National Highways Act, 1956, the Land Acquisition Officer determines the compensation amount for acquired land, and in case of dissatisfaction, the landholder may seek enhancement by approaching the Arbitrator, i.e., the District Collector.

5. It is the case of the prosecution that during the relevant period, especially between 01.03.2025 and 17.04.2025, a systematic manipulation of arbitration proceedings was carried out. After the transfer of the then District Collector on 22.04.2025 and prior to the assumption of charge by the new Collector on 24.04.2025, several arbitration orders were fraudulently prepared by using old dates and by misusing the name, designation, and signature of the former Collector. These fabricated orders were processed through the Land Acquisition Coordination Branch, which is responsible for maintaining records, issuing notices, and forwarding arbitration matters. It is alleged that applications for enhanced compensation were falsely shown as processed, notices were purportedly issued to concerned parties including NHAI, and orders granting enhanced compensation were created without actual hearings or presence of the parties. The preliminary enquiry dated 01.03.2025 revealed serious irregularities in as many as 154 cases, including issuance of orders without outward numbers, use of backdated documents, and passing of orders without conducting hearings. Notably, on 17.04.2025, around 50 orders were issued in a single day without the presence of concerned parties, which raises grave suspicion.

6. It was further revealed that the original compensation amount of Rs. 68.58 crore was fraudulently enhanced to Rs. 310.20 crore, out of which approximately Rs. 73 crore was disbursed. The enquiry concluded that fake arbitration orders were generated and used to siphon off government funds, thereby misleading the competent authority and causing wrongful loss to the State exchequer. During the course of enquiry, 10 persons, including the present applicants, were identified as being primarily responsible for the said fraudulent activities. It is alleged that the accused persons, in furtherance of their common intention, prepared forged documents, facilitated illegal disbursement of compensation amounts, and received commissions from the misappropriated funds, thereby embezzling huge amount of public money.

7. In view of the aforesaid serious irregularities, the magnitude of the fraud, and the findings of the enquiry committee, the present FIR bearing No. 0544 of 2025 dated 19.11.2025 came to be registered at Shivajinagar Police Station, Beed, against the accused persons, including the present applicants.

8. Learned counsel for the applicants submits that the applicants have been falsely implicated in the present crime with an intention to harass them, as they are practicing advocates. The applicants are falsely alleged to have prepared backdated forged orders bearing the signature of the arbitrator and thereby abetting the commission of the offence.

9. The applicants are practicing advocates in land acquisition matters. The awards were passed by the competent authority and compensation was paid to the landowners whose lands were acquired. The compensation as determined by the Land Acquisition Officer was accepted by the landowners under protest, and thereafter filed arbitration applications before the Arbitrator. It is not the allegation of the prosecution that no such arbitration applications were filed by the advocates for the landowners. However, the allegation pertains only to the passing of forged orders on a backdate, by portraying the same as having been passed on a particular date on which the arbitrator is alleged to have put his signature after his retirement. The allegation against the applicants is that, being practicing advocates, they facilitated the obtaining of such backdated orders/awards passed by the arbitrator.

10. The present applicants, being practicing advocates, have filed arbitration applications before the Collector, Beed, which is evident from the roznama of each such arbitration proceeding. It is submitted that the judgments/awards were passed by the arbitrator with his signatures on each page. The certified copies were issued within a period of 1 to 7 days from the date of the judgment, and therefore, there was no question of any backdated signatures, as alleged by the prosecution. It is further submitted that there is no question of the applicants putting any signatures on the alleged backdated awards passed by the arbitrator. The arbitrator was transferred on 22.04.2025.

11. Since the applicant advocates had filed complaints before the Collector against the Deputy Collector, Dhumal, regarding the hindrances created in the smooth functioning of advocates in securing relief for their clients in respect of enhanced awards passed by the arbitrator, the present FIR has been lodged against the applicants with an intention to wreak vengeance.

12. That the applicants had also filed complaints against the Senior Clerk, Sanjay Hange, and Contact Clerk, Avinash Chauhan, regarding their misconduct. The said complaints were pending for disposal and were also published on the website of the Collector. It is submitted that the Collector, being aggrieved by such complaints made by the applicant advocates, has caused the present FIR to be registered. It is further submitted that if the arbitral awards are found to be not genuine, the same can be set aside by filing appropriate applications under Section 34 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

13. It is further submitted that, interestingly, the officer who is alleged to have signed the said awards on prior dates before his transfer has not been made an accused in the present crime. The enquiry committee has not recorded the statement of the arbitrator, namely Avinash Pathak, who was working as Deputy Collector and acted as an arbitrator. The said arbitrator has also not been arrested till date.

14. The learned counsel further submits that this Court, by order dated 23.12.2025 (in ABA Nos. 2243 of 2025, 2256 of 2025, and 2302 of 2025) and by order dated 14.01.2026 (in ABA No. 61 of 2026), granted interim protection to the present applicants, subject to the condition that they shall attend the police station as and when called by the Investigating Officer and shall cooperate with the investigation. It is submitted that the applicants have complied with the said interim orders and have not violated any of the conditions imposed. The applicants do not have any criminal antecedents. The applicants are practicing advocates and, if arrested, the same would cause serious damage to their reputation and image in society. The applicants have merely performed acts in the course of their professional duties, and are not been involved in any offence earlier, and have a clean record. No recovery is required to be effected from the applicant advocates, and therefore, the applicants may be released on bail.

15. As against this, the learned Public Prosecutor has strongly opposed the present applications and submitted that there is a strong prima facie case against the applicants, as their names have surfaced during the course of enquiry and their involvement is revealed from the material collected during investigation. It is submitted that from the mobile phone seized from co-accused Trimbak, it has transpired that the present applicant was in frequent contact with the said co-accused and had made several calls to him, and was also in contact with other accused persons namely Sanjay Hange and Shaikh Azhar, which clearly indicates that all the accused were acting in concert and were in continuous communication through WhatsApp messages and voice calls, as reflected in the enquiry report. It is further submitted that the applicant was handling arbitration matters and is a practicing advocate for NHAI, and during the enquiry it has been revealed that he was in touch with office staff as well as absconding accused persons, and had even pressurized government servants to prepare bogus arbitration awards. The learned APP further submitted that the offence is of a very serious nature involving forgery of government records and misappropriation of public funds to the tune of Rs. 73.4 crores, committed in a planned and systematic manner. That custodial interrogation of the applicant is necessary for effective investigation, particularly for obtaining voice samples, verification of recorded conversations, and seizure of the applicant's mobile phone, and that crucial evidence is yet to be collected. It is also contended that if the applicant is released on bail, there is a strong likelihood that he will pressurize witnesses, tamper with prosecution evidence, and may commit similar offences. It is further submitted that upon discovery of the fraud, an enquiry committee was constituted and during such enquiry the involvement of the present applicant was revealed, which ultimately led to registration of the present crime. Hence, it is prayed that the present Anticipatory Bail Applications be rejected.

16. I have gone through the investigation papers made available by the learned Public Prosecutor, Mr. Girase. Upon perusal of the same, it appears that in pursuance of the interim orders passed by this Court, the applicants have attended the concerned police station and have cooperated with the investigation.

17. The investigation papers further reveal that the statement of the then arbitrator, namely Avinash Pathak, has not been recorded to confirm whether the signatures on the awards allegedly signed by him are after his transfer or before it. It is also noteworthy that the said officer has not been arraigned as an accused in the present crime. The allegations in the FIR indicate that all the accused persons, in furtherance of their common intention, prepared forged and backdated documents by obtaining the signatures of the arbitrator and thereby conspired to commit the alleged offence.

18. The preliminary enquiry conducted by the complainant indicates that in about 154 cases decided between 01.03.2025 and 17.04.2025, awards were issued on earlier dates without assigning outward numbers. It is further alleged that the original compensation amount of Rs. 68.58 crores was enhanced to Rs. 310.20 crores on the basis of such backdated awards, resulting in wrongful loss to the Government exchequer. The enquiry committee has identified 10 persons, including the present applicants, as being primarily responsible.

19. However, as against the present applicants, the material placed on record prima facie indicates that the only circumstance relied upon by the prosecution is their telephonic contact with the arrested co-accused persons who are officials of Collector Office. The applicants are practicing advocates, and in the normal course of their professional duties, they are expected to remain in communication with the officers of the Collector's office where such proceedings are conducted.

20. The submission of the learned Senior Counsel, Mr. Deshmukh, along with the learned counsel Mr. Salunke, that the present FIR may be an outcome of prior complaints made by the advocates against the office staff and the Deputy Collector regarding alleged irregularities in the functioning of the office, cannot be completely ruled out at this stage. However, these observations are prima facie in nature and are made only for the purpose of deciding the present applications.

21. Be that as it may, It is an admitted position that the applicants have complied with the interim protection granted by this Court and have cooperated with the investigation. The learned Public Prosecutor has fairly submitted that there is no violation of the conditions imposed earlier. It also appears that the investigation, insofar as the present applicants are concerned, is substantially completed.

22. Considering the aforesaid aspects, the role attributed to the applicants, the nature of evidence collected, and the fact that custodial interrogation does not appear to be necessary at this stage, I am inclined to protect the applicants.

O R D E R

i. The Anticipatory Bail Applications are allowed.

ii. The interim orders dated 23.12.2025 and 14.01.2026 are hereby confirmed, subject to the following conditions:

A) The applicants shall attend the concerned police station and report to the Investigating Officer as and when called, till filing of the charge-sheet.

B) The Applicants shall also cooperate with the investigation.

C) The applicants shall not, directly or indirectly, make any inducement, threat, or promise to any prosecution witness and shall not tamper with the prosecution evidence in any manner.

D) The applicants shall furnish copies of his Aadhaar Card and PAN Card to the Investigating Officer along with the addresses and mobile numbers of two nearest relatives.

23. Needless to state that a single violation of any of the aforesaid conditions shall entitle the prosecution to seek cancellation of the anticipatory bail granted herein.

24. The observations made herein are prima facie and shall not influence the Trial Court while deciding the case on its own merits.

25. The Anticipatory Bail Applications stand disposed of accordingly.

(MEHROZ K. PATHAN, J.)