



IN THE HIGH COURT OF ORISSA AT CUTTACK
BLAPL NOS.1912, 1984, 2054, 2259, 2522,
2683, 2942, 2964, 3423, 3433, 3906, 4961, 5825,
5893 of 2026

(In the matter of applications under Section 483 of
BNSS, 2023).

Sridhar Mantry

(In BLAPL No.1912 of 2026)

Nirmalya Krushna Das

(In BLAPL No.1984 of 2026)

Gangadhar Jena

(In BLAPL No.2054 of 2026)

Suresh Chandra Nayak

(In BLAPL No.2259 of 2026)

Alok Sahoo

(In BLAPL No.2522 of 2026)

Sankar Prusty

(In BLAPL No.2683 of 2026)

Sapan Kumar Panda

(In BLAPL No.2942 of 2026)

Lokanath Sahoo

(In BLAPL No.2964 of 2026)

Tafim Ahemmad Khan

(In BLAPL No. 3423 of 2026)

Ramjee Prasad Gupta

(In BLAPL No. 3433 of 2026)

Jyotirmayee Sahoo @ Jyotirmayee Sahu

(In BLAPL No. 3906 of 2026)

Satya Brata Mohanty @ Milu

(In BLAPL No.4961 of 2026)

Epili Sitaram @ E.Sitaram

(In BLAPL No.5825 of 2026)

Himansu Sekhar Dash

(In BLAPL No.5893 of 2026) ... Petitioners

*Mr. D. Nayak, Sr. Advocate along with
Mr. P. Nayak, Advocate & Mr. B.K. Das, Advocate
(in BLAPL Nos.1912 & 2683 of 2026)*



*Mr. M. Kanungo, Sr. Advocate along
with Mr. S.R. Mohanty, Advocate
(in BLAPL Nos.1984 & 5893 of 2026)
Mr. S.C. Mohapatra, Sr. Advocate along
with Mr. S. Mohapatra, Advocate
(in BLAPL No.2522 of 2026)
Mr. M. Khatua, Advocate
(in BLAPL No.2054 of 2026)
Mr. D. Nair, Advocate along with
Mr. S. Mohapatra, Advocate
(in BLAPL No.2259 of 2026)
Mr. S.R. Panda, Advocate
(in BLAPL No.2942 of 2026)
Mr. B.K. Das, Advocate
(in BLAPL Nos.2964, 3423 & 5825 of 2026)
Mr. D.K. Das, Advocate
(In BLAPL No.3433 of 2026)
Ms. C. Tripathy, Advocate
(In BLAPL No.3906 of 2026)
Mr. B.B. Choudhury, Advocate
(in BLAPL No.4961 of 2026)*

-versus-

State of Odisha

... Opposite Party

*Mr. P.S. Nayak, specially
engaged counsel for the State*

CORAM: JUSTICE G. SATAPATHY
DATE OF HEARING & JUDGMENT:17.07.2026

G. Satapathy, J.

1. These are bail applications U/S.483 of BNSS by the petitioners for grant of bail in connection with Lalbag PS Case No.463 of 2025 corresponding to



GR Case No.1047 of 2025 pending in the file of learned SDJM Sadar, Cuttack, for commission of offences punishable U/Ss. 316(2)/ 316(5)/ 318(4)/ 61(2)/ 111/ 3(5) of BNS.

2. The relevant facts in background for registration of this criminal case against some of the petitioners and others in sequence are:-

(i) On 14.05.2025, the High Court of Orissa issued an advertisement vide Advertisement No. 02 of 2024 inviting application from the eligible candidates for filling up 147 posts of Assistant Section Officer (ASO). The recruitment process was accordingly decided to be conducted in four phases; Preliminary Examination, Main Examination, Computer Test & Viva Voce Test.

(ii) Pursuant to the advertisement, a total of 32,239 applications were received, but only 32,189 candidates were found eligible to appear in preliminary examination, but the Preliminary Examination was outsourced to M/s. Sillicon Techlab Pvt. Ltd, Bhubaneswar (in short "the Agency") as it was selected in a duly bidding process. Although the petitioner- Suresh Chandra Nayak was the Director of Agency at the relevant time, but the agreement



was signed by Ms. Ipsita Priyadarshini as an Authorized Representative of the Agency. It was accordingly decided to conduct the Preliminary Examination in Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) mode at the rate of Rs.160/- per candidate including GST and the data base of the eligible candidates was handed over to the Agency.

(iii) The Agency did not share the details of the examination centers with the High Court eventually resulting in lot of complaints and after series of meetings with the petitioner-Suresh Chandra Nayak and others representing the Agency, namely the petitioner Himansu Sekhar Dash, Sridhar Mantry (Project Head and SME of the Agency) and Ms. Ipsita Priyadarshini (project co-coordinator of the Agency), the Agency finally remapped the examination centers and reopened the site for downloading of admit cards. The Agency accordingly conducted the Preliminary Examination in OMR mode on 04.05.2025 across the State and in such exam, 20,260 out of 32,189 candidates appeared.

(iv) In terms of the advertisement, the candidates belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes categories are required to secure 33% out of the total marks and the candidates of other category are required to secure 40% out of the total marks to



qualify for the next exam i.e. the Main Written Examination. The preliminary examination was of 150 marks and it was of 2 hours duration.

(v) After evaluation of OMR sheets, the Agency submitted the result on 09.05.2025 stating that only 7,116 candidates have been qualified in the Preliminary Examination, however, on reassessment of result by the Recruitment Cell of the High Court of Orissa, it was found that some invalid OMR sheets had been accepted as valid and three candidates not having required qualifying marks were also stated to have been qualified in the exam. Accordingly, the same was brought to the knowledge of the Agency and the Agency revised the result by submitting a fresh list on 15.05.2025 stating therein that 7,113 candidates have qualified in the Preliminary Examination instead of 7,116 as shown earlier.

(vi) The bill amounting to Rs.51,50,498/- of the Agency for conducting Preliminary Examination was accordingly paid.

(vii) The Agency offered a proposal to conduct the Main Written Examination and Computer Application Test at the rate of Rs.1,150/- per candidate and accordingly, a contract was awarded in favour of the Agency to conduct the Main Written Examination and Computer Application Test at the rate of Rs.1,000/-



per candidate including GST and an agreement was executed thereto by the petitioner-Himansu Sekhar Dash as the Authorized Representative of the Agency with Registrar (Judicial), High Court of Orissa.

(viii) The Main Written Examination was held on 13.07.2025 at 11 different centers in the districts of Khurda and Cuttack and in such examination, 6,014 candidates appeared in English, 6,009 candidates appeared in General Awareness & Test of Reasoning and 5,979 candidates appeared in Mathematics. All the aforesaid papers were of 100 marks each and the General Awareness & Test of Reasoning was of one hour duration, whereas the rest two papers were of two hour duration each.

(ix) On 14.07.2025, the Agency submitted the copies of question papers as well as the copies of Model answer sheets of all the three papers to the High Court. The Agency got the answer sheets evaluated and submitted the results along with answer sheets to the High Court on 12.08.2025 informing that 2,120 candidates have come out successful.

(x) On scrutiny of the result and verification of the materials relating to examination, large scale illegalities were found to have been committed



compromising the fairness in the examination and it was found that the Main Written Examination was not conducted in all fairness and confidentiality in terms of the agreement. Accordingly, on 28.11.2025, the Registrar (Examination), High Court of Orissa lodged an FIR before Lalbag Police Station which came to be registered as P.S. Case No. 463 of 2025 against the petitioners- Suresh Chandra Nayak, Himansu Sekhar Dash, Sridhar Mantry, Ms. Ipsita Priyadarshini and others and the matter was investigated into.

(xi) In the course of investigation, several candidates were found to have reproduced the answer identical to the model answer sheets and many candidates had access to confidential question papers prior to the exam and multiple candidates had reproduced answer in verbatim from leaked model answers.

(xii) The investigation reveals on Call Details Record(CDR) analysis about frequent communication between the accused persons and candidates at various stages of exam. In the course of investigation, it was found that the petitioners and others in active criminal conspiracy leaked the question papers prior to the examination and supplied the model answer sheets to some of the candidates resulting in large scale malpractice in the



exam leading to cancellation of the Main Written Examination.

(xiii) Finding prima facie material against the petitioners and others, charge sheet was placed against them for commission of offence punishable U/Ss.316(2)/ 316(5)/ 318(4)/ 61(2)/ 111/ 3(5) of BNS keeping the investigation open U/Ss.193(9) of BNSS. The complicity of the petitioners being allegedly found, they were taken into custody, but since their bail applications were rejected by the learned Addl. Sessions Judge, Cuttack, they are before this Court in these bail applications.

3. In highlighting the facts of the case, Mr. Dharanidhar Nayak, learned Senior Counsel, who is being assisted by Mr. Pratik Nayak, learned counsel for the petitioners in BLAPL Nos. 1912 of 2026 and assisted by Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, learned counsel for the petitioner in BLAPL No. 2683 of 2026, submits that there is no direct materials/ evidence against any of the petitioners, but the petitioner-Sridhar Mantry has been implicated in this case for leakage of question papers, however, if the materials on record are taken into consideration, the petitioner-Sridhar Mantry would only



be found to have been to Saraswati press, Calcutta to obtain the question papers in his pen drive to discharge his duties as a Project Head of the Agency and the so called materials placed on record do not constitute the offences alleged against the petitioner. It is also submitted by Mr. Nayak that nothing has been seized to show that the question paper seized in this case are the copy of original question papers and similarly nobody has stated that the model question papers given to the students were the same as the question papers given in the examination. It is further submitted that there is no iota of evidence available against the petitioners and the petitioner- Sridhar Mantry is an Engineer by profession and has been working with Agency for the past 07 years as the Project Head, but the Agency is empanelled by the Government of Odisha and the Agency was the successful bidder in the tender floated by High Court of Orissa for conducting the examination of ASO, 2025 and the petitioner's role was limited in so far as he was charged with the duty of verifying the question papers and to make sure that all the question



papers are correct, but the petitioner-Sridhar Mantry has no involvement in marking of centres, invigilation of examination hall and evaluation of answer sheets and the allegation on record do not explicitly states the illegality committed by the Agency and thereby, the allegation raised against the petitioners are vague and baseless. Mr. Nayak further submits that even if accepting the entire prosecution allegation on the face of it, the basic ingredients required to constitute the alleged offences are squarely lacking against the petitioners, but bail being the rule and the petitioner being a permanent resident of Jagatsinghpur, there is hardly any scope for his absconding and therefore, there would not be any impediment to grant bail to the petitioner-Sridhar Mantry. Mr. Nayak further submits that the petitioner Sankar Prusty in BLAPL No. 2683 is the Director of Panchsoft Technologies Pvt. Ltd., whose role is only for supply of manpower to the Agency and there is no specific allegation against the petitioner Sankar Prusty in the FIR and no offence is made out



against him and the petitioner being a permanent resident of Narendrapur under Chamakhandi Police Station, there is hardly any apprehension of his absconding and thereby, the petitioner- Sankar Prusty may kindly be granted bail.

3.1. In echoing the submission as advanced by Mr. Nayak, Mr. Soura Chandra Mohapatra, learned Senior Counsel, who is being assisted by Mr. S. Mohapatra, learned counsel for the petitioner-Alok Sahoo in BLAPL No. 2522 of 2026 submits that no doubt the petitioner has been arrested U/S.111 of BNS along with other offences, but the ingredients of Sec.111 of BNS are totally absent against the petitioner and the said Section has been only added to detain the petitioner further. It is further submitted that the petitioner Alok Kumar Sahoo was earlier engaged as the part time employee of the Agency, but he had resigned from the said company w.e.f. 29.02.2024 and thereafter, he joined the M/s. Panchsoft Technology Pvt. Ltd. and was there till 20.11.2025 and thereby, he



has no role in the present case, neither as a candidate nor for working for the Agency to conduct the examination. It is also submitted for the petitioner Alok Sahoo that the petitioner has been implicated in this case mainly on the basis of statement of witnesses- Akash Kumar Jena and Ashutosh Biswal, but on a bare reading of their statement, the petitioner would be found to be engaged by Sankar Prusty and he was present at a place in a house situated at Pokhariput, but merely the CDR discloses that the petitioner was in contact with some of the co-accused persons which by itself is not sufficient to say conclusively that he was talking about the examination and its modality to have any role in malpractice in the examination and there is hardly any material to suggest that the petitioner is involved in any criminal conspiracy in the present case and the investigation being over, it would not be proper to keep the petitioner in confinement. Accordingly, Mr. Mohapatra prays to grant bail to the petitioner-Alok Sahoo.



3.2. More or less is the submission advanced by Mr. Milan Kanungo, learned Senior Counsel, who is being assisted by Mr. Soumya Ranjan Mohanty, learned counsel for the petitioners Nirmalya Krushna Das and Himanshu Sekhar Dash in BLAPL Nos. 1984 & 5893 of 2026. It is accordingly submitted that the petitioner Nirmalya Krushna Das was a salaried employee of the Agency and was only responsible for providing manpower for handling and installation of CCTV cameras in the centers and thereby, the role of the petitioner is to provide logistic support in the exam and the petitioner is a victim of circumstance and he has cooperated the investigation, but no custodial investigation is required in this case, since the charge sheet has already been filed and thereby, the petitioner being not a flight risk or otherwise having no influence over the witnesses or tampering the evidence, he may kindly be granted bail. It is also submitted by Mr. Kanungo to grant bail to the petitioner-Himansu Sekhar Das as no case is made out against him and the allegation against him is motivated and product of



malice as he has no role in conducting the exam. Further, Mr. Kanungo, alternatively prays to grant at least interim bail to the petitioner-Himansu Sekhar Das for the treatment of his sister.

3.3. Mr. Manoranjan Khatua, learned counsel for the petitioner-Gangadhar Jena in BLAPL No. 2054 of 2026 submits that the petitioner has been implicated in this case mainly on CDR analysis, but the petitioner has no role or nexus with the Agency nor is he involved in this case in any way. Mr. Khatua further submits that the petitioner being an intermediary was alleged to have been engaged in facilitating the candidates and coordinating illegal arrangements of monetary consideration, but even according to the prosecution case, only two original certificates were seized from the possession of the petitioner and the said certificates have not been identified or proved to be the certificates of concerned candidates and thereby, the prosecution case by itself being found to have admitted that the documents seized from the petitioner has no lawful



nexus with candidate concerned, the petitioner's detention in custody is unwarranted and the petitioner having detained in custody for more than five months and thereby, he having sufficiently punished, the petitioner-Gangadhar Jena may kindly be granted bail.

3.4. Mr. Sandeep Raj Panda, learned counsel for the petitioner- Sapan Kumar Panda in BLAPL No. 2942 of 2026 submits that the petitioner has been taken into custody in this case on the main allegation of his involvement by tracing his bank transactions and statements recorded during investigation, but no incriminating document is seized from his possession and the petitioner has already explained that the transfer of money arose from separate lawful transactions and there is no material to suggest that the petitioner has any role in the malpractice, which is allegedly taken place in conducting the exam and the prosecution case being based predominately on documentary and electronic evidence which have already been seized, the further detention of the



petitioner is unwarranted and thereby, the petitioner Sapan Kumar Panda may kindly be granted bail.

3.5. Mr. Dharendra Kumar Das, learned counsel for the petitioner- Ramjee Prasad Gupta in BLAPL No. 3433 of 2026 submits that although the petitioner is named in the FIR, but he has no role in this case and the petitioner is in custody since long. It is further submitted that although the petitioner is allegedly involved in another case which is the OTET case, but he being innocent and granted bail therein, the petitioner may kindly be granted bail.

3.6. Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, learned counsel for the petitioners namely Lokanath Sahoo, Tafim Ahemmad Khan & Epili Sitaram @ E. Sitaram in BLAPL Nos. 2964, 3423 & 5825 of 2026 submits that no prima facie case is made out against any of these three petitioners, who are no way connected with this case and even if accepting the prosecution allegation on its face value, no basic ingredient of any offence alleged against the petitioners is made out, but the petitioners



have been detained in custody since long and they being permanent resident of different places of the State and there being no apprehension of their absconding, the petitioners may kindly be granted bail. Mr. Das also submits that the allegation against the petitioners is out and out false and they are not in any way concerned with this case and therefore, further detention of the petitioners in custody is unwarranted. On the aforesaid submission, Mr. Das prays to grant bail to these three petitioners.

3.7. Ms. Chandana Tripathy, learned counsel for the petitioner-Jyotirmayee Sahoo @ Jyotirmayee Sahu in BLAPL No. 3906 of 2026 submits that the petitioner has neither any nexus with the Agency nor is she involved in any tender process or execution of any agreement or contract for conduct of the examination and thereby, the allegation against the petitioner is baseless and omnibus and general in nature. It is also submitted for the petitioner Jyotirmayee Sahoo @ Jyotirmayee Sahu that the prosecution allegation



against the petitioner is that she acted as a middle man or broker for circulating the leaked question papers, but the such allegations are mere bald assertion without any further material or evidence collected during the investigation and the entire case of prosecution exists on the documentary evidence, such as agreement, OMR sheets, answer sheets and official correspondence which have already been seized and thereby, there is no possibility of tampering the evidence or influencing the investigation by the petitioner in any manner and she being a lady aged about 28 years, she may kindly be granted bail.

3.8. Mr. Bibhuti Bhusan Nayak, learned counsel for the petitioner Satya Brata Mohanty @ Milu in BLAPL No. 4961 of 2026 submits that the petitioner was neither named in the FIR nor has any role in this case and there is absolutely no material to show his direct involvement in this case for leakage of question papers or manipulation in evaluation process or tampering official records and the entire allegation against the



petitioner is on bald assertion without any legally admissible & corroboratory materials and so far, the allegation against the petitioner for receiving Rs.3Lakhs from the father of the candidate Ashutosh Biswal, it is factually incorrect and out and out false. It is further submitted that nothing has been recovered from conscious possession of the petitioner to connect him with the alleged offence. Mr. Choudhury further submits that the petitioner is not an employee of the Agency and nothing has been seized from him and the allegation against him for demanding Rs.20Lakhs from candidates, no document relating to bank transaction of the petitioner has been seized to connect him with the said allegation. On the aforesaid submission, Mr. Choudhury prays to grant bail to the petitioner.

3.9. Mr. Dheeraj Nair, learned counsel for the petitioner-Surendra Chandra Nayak submits that the petitioner being the Director of the Agency has neither any role nor has any overt act attributed to him and the materials placed on record at best disclose a



contractual dispute between the petitioner and the High Court of Orissa, but the FIR has been lodged after some months of expiry of such contractual agreement and the incorporation of offence U/S.111 of BNS in the charge sheet is wholly inapplicable to the case at hand, since there is no organized crime and the petitioner is never a flight risk. Mr. Nair further submits that there are 45 witnesses cited in the charge sheet and the case wholly rests upon documentary evidence which has already been collected and there is hardly any apprehension about tampering of documentary evidence by the petitioner, but trial would definitely take some more time and therefore, it is not advisable to keep the accused-petitioner in confinement for long period. It is also submitted for the petitioner that criminal liability cannot be fastened vicariously upon a Director in absence of a statutory provision and more so when, there is no specific allegation of any active role played by the petitioner coupled with criminal intent. Further, it is submitted by Mr. Nair that no



criminal antecedent has been reported against the petitioner and thereby, the petitioner can be admitted to bail. Under aforesaid submissions, Mr. Nair prays to grant bail to the petitioner Suresh Chandra Nayak.

3.10. On the other hand, Mr. Partha Sarathi Nayak, learned Specially Engaged Counsel for the State in opposing the prayer of the petitioners submits that not only the petitioners had mobilized the candidates by collecting advance money ranging between Rs.2Lakhs to Rs.4Lakhs each, but also there are enough materials to suggest the involvement of the petitioners for the malpractice in the process of examination and there is significant allegation against the petitioner-Sridhar Mantry, who is the Project Head of the Agency and he has allegedly destroyed the digital evidence by formatting his Laptop. Mr. Nayak further submits that similarly the petitioner Suresh Chandra Nayak being the Director of the Agency, exercised over all control and illegally entrusted the examination to M/s. Panchsoft and supervised



dissemination of leaked question papers through the petitioner Himanshu Sekhar Dash, who acted as operational link between the Agency and the intermediaries. It is also submitted that the petitioner Sankar Prusty being the Director of M/s. Panchsoft Technologies Pvt. Ltd. is the master mind behind the malpractice and he had unauthorizedly collected illegal gratification and operated the tutoring centers through the petitioner Alok Sahoo, Nirmalya Krushna Das for supplying the question papers and answer sheets to the respective candidates. It is also submitted that the petitioners Gangadhar Jena, Jyotirmayee Sahoo @ Jyotirmayee Sahu, Sapan Kumar Panda, Tafim Ahemmad Khan, Ramjee Prasad Gupta, Epili Sitaram @ E. Sitaram and Satya Brata Mohanty @ Milu mobilized the candidates and collected advanced consideration money, retained original educational certificates as security from the candidates, transported candidates to the secret coaching centers and facilitated dissemination of hand written model answer sheets



identical to actual question papers and thereby, there is prima facie materials against these petitioners. Mr. Nayak submits that the petitioner Suresh Chandra Nayak, Sankar Prusty, Tafim Ahemmad Khan, Lokanath Sahoo and Epili Sitaram @ E. Sitaram are also involved in similar cases relating to recruitment of Sub-Inspector of Police exam in Odisha, whereas the petitioner Ramjee Prasad Gupta is implicated in OTET question papers leakage case and thereby, the activities of these petitioners are not only confined to this case, but also they are involved in other criminal case of similar nature and release of the petitioners would allow them to tamper with the evidence likely to be tendered in this case and the petitioners having definite role in sabotaging the exam, their bail applications may kindly be rejected.

4. After having considered the rival submissions upon perusal of record, it appears that the FIR has been registered against the petitioners Suresh Chandra Nayak, Himanshu Sekhar Das, Sridhar Mantry,



Ipsita Priyadarshini (not a petitioner) and others and there appears allegation against the petitioners for leaking the question papers of ASO Examination, 2025 in a systematic and organized manner by receiving illegal gratification and thereby, forcing the High Court to cancel the Main Examination of the ASO recruitment and reconduct it. It cannot be disputed that due to cancellation of examination, thousands of candidates must have suffered. Besides, this is not the solitary case against the petitioner Sankar Prusty, Suresh Chandra Nayak, Tafim Ahemmad Khan, Lokanath Sahoo and Epili Sitaram @ E. Sitaram, who have been allegedly implicated earlier in the criminal case lodged for leaking of question papers of recruitment Examination of Sub-Inspector of Police in the State of Odisha which forced the State Government to cancel such recruitment examination and reconduct it. Similarly, the petitioner Ramjee Prasad Gupta is also implicated in OTET question paper leak case. The materials on record also discloses that the petitioner



Suresh Chandra Nayak is the Director of the Agency, who was entrusted to conduct the Main Examination which was cancelled for leaking of the question papers and supplying the model answers to the candidates. The allegations against the petitioners as gathered from the record revolve around the larger angle of conspiracy and the role as alleged against each of the petitioners is available in details on record. Sabotaging the exam in this way by leaking the question papers and supplying the model answer sheets to the aspiring candidates definitely corrodes the morale of meritorious candidates and the allegation against the petitioner definitely reveals a crime against society, which cannot be accepted in any way and the allegation against the petitioners depicts a socio economic offence of huge magnitude and no civilized society can ever accept the leaking of question papers in recruitment examination to Government posts. This Court, however, is conscious of the fact that the charge sheet has already been submitted and the petitioners are in custody for some time, but that is not enough to



consider the bail applications of the petitioners in a case like this. In this regard, this Court is also alive with the decision in ***State of Bihar & another Vrs. Amit Kumar Alias Bachcha Rai; (2017) 13 SCC 751*** wherein the Apex Court while dealing with somewhat similar issue has held at Paragraph-8 as under:-

"8. A bare reading of the order impugned discloses that the High Court has not given any reasoning while granting bail. In a mechanical way, the High Court granted bail more on the fact that the accused is already in custody for a long time. When the seriousness of the offence is such the mere fact that he was in jail for, however, long time should not be the concern of the courts. We are not able to appreciate such a casual approach while granting bail in a case which has the effect of undermining the trust of people in the integrity of the education system in the State of Bihar."

5. It is also equally important that if an undeserving candidate is allowed to get the job by corrupt means, not only the society will be deprived of deserving candidates, but also it would be unfair for those meritorious candidates who are honestly working hard and waiting for their turn in the exam, but ultimately finding themselves disentitled to the post



because of such fraudulent practices and malpractices of unscrupulous persons. It is also equally important that the socio-economic offence constitute a class apart and need to be visited with different approach in the matter of bail. It cannot be forgotten that competitive and public recruitment exams demand the highest standards of integrity and transparency, but in recent past malicious elements, organized paper leak syndicate, negligent service vendors have severely disrupted public exams. These paper leaks yield massive illicit financial gains for criminals while shattering the confidence of millions of hardworking youths. The leakage of public recruitment exam papers is not merely a common criminal offence; it is a direct assault on the socio-economic fabric of the society and shatters the public trust in meritocracy. The offence deprives lakhs of honest hardworking candidates of their livelihood causing deep institutional damage and public anger.



6. In the course of investigation, the Investigating Agency has seized question papers, model answer sheets as well as mobile phones, hard disks and other electronic devices/gazettes together with financial transaction records and candidates data and analyzed the CDR analysis. It cannot also be forgotten that pursuant to the advertisement for filling up 147 posts of ASO in High Court of Orissa, 32,239 applications were received, out of such application 32,189 candidates were found eligible, but 20,260 candidates appeared in the Preliminary Exam, whereas 7116 candidates were declared eligible to sit in the Main Exam, but more than 5000 candidates appeared in the Main Examination which was in fact cancelled due to allegation of leakage of question papers and irregularity and malpractices done in the exam by the Agency. It is alleged that the intermediary induced the candidates with assurance of success in the exam for illegal gratification ranging from Rs. 2Lakh to Rs.4Lakh. It is also alleged that the candidates were transported to different tutoring



centers at Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Berhampur and they were provided with hand written model answers identical to the actual examination content and they were instructed to memorize and reproduce such answers during examination which is evident from the statement of some of the candidates.

7. It appears that the petitioner Sridhar Mantry being the Project Head and subject matter expert of the Agency has been alleged for entering into conspiracy for the leakage of question papers and supply of model answers to the candidates appearing in the ASO Examination, 2024-25. Besides, there is allegation against the petitioner Sridhar Mantry for personally visiting the press and supplying confidential examination materials including question papers and model answers in soft copy through a pen-drive for printing purpose. It is also found from the record that model answer sheets were allegedly seized from his official table and his laptop was stated to be formatted to destroy digital evidence. Similarly, there is allegation



against the petitioner Himanshu Sekhar Dash, who is the Authorized Signatory of the Agency for having active role in conspiracy with co-accused persons. The petitioners Suresh Chandra Nayak, Sridhar Mantry, Sankar Prusty, Alok Sahoo and Nirmalya Krushna Das have been alleged for facilitating leakage of question papers and model answers sheets. The petitioner Nirmalya Krushna Das being an employee of Panchsoft Technology has been alleged for actively participating in criminal conspiracy to supply the model answers to the candidates. It is also alleged against the petitioner-Gangadhar Jena for supplying the question papers and model answer sheets to the candidates of ASO Examination, 2024-25 as a broker or agent and the same allegation is against the petitioner Jyotirmayee Sahoo @ Jyotirmayee Sahu, Alok Sahoo and Sapan Kumar Panda. It is, however, alleged against the petitioner Loknath Sahoo for facilitating leakage of question papers and supply of model answers to the candidates, so also against the petitioner Tafim



Ahemmad Khan. It is alleged that the petitioner Ramjee Prasad Gupta is one of the principal accused for leakage of question papers and supply of model answer sheets to the candidates and his role can be ascertained from the statement of witnesses Biswa Pratap Rout, Arun Kumar Jena, Ansul Sarangi, Prasant Lenka. It is also alleged against the petitioner Suresh Chandra Nayak that under his direction, the Examination process was illegally delegated to M/s. Panchsoft Pvt. Ltd. through co-accused Sankar Prusty and the same is without approval of the High Court and in clear violation of contractual conditions. It is further alleged that the petitioner Sridhar Mantry was the custodian of question papers and model answers and the petitioner Himanshu Sekhar Dash, was entrusted to conduct the exam under the supervision and control of the petitioner Suresh Chandra Nayak, but he has been alleged for leaking the question papers through the co-accused persons. Similarly, there is serious allegation against the petitioner Sankar Prusty for facilitating leakage of question papers and supply of model answer sheets to



the candidates of ASO Examination, 2024-25 and it is alleged that the CDR analysis of the mobile nos. used by the petitioner Sankar Prusty reveals frequent contact between him, beneficiary candidates, agents and co-accused persons and his phone was allegedly switched off during 10.07.2025 to 12.07.2025. The statement of witnesses Gitanjali Patra, Ashutosh Biswal and Akash Kumar Jena reveal allegation against the petitioner Sankar Prusty.

8. It is, albeit, claimed for the petitioner Suresh Chandra Nayak in the written argument that a pending investigation cannot be equated with criminal antecedents warranting denial of bail, nonetheless the petitioner-Suresh Chandra Nayak is allegedly found implicated in CBI ACB FIR No.RC-35-(A)/2025 {RC0152025A0035}, which is a case involving allegation of leaking of question papers in SI of Police Recruitment Examination in the State of Odisha. No doubt bail is the rule, but jail is the exception, however, one of the important considerations for detaining a



person in custody is preventing him from commission of further crime and the alleged involvement of the petitioners-Suresh Chandra Nayak, Shankar Prusty, Tafim Ahmed Khan, Lokanath Sahu, Ramjee Prasad Gupta & Ipili Sitaram in another case of similar nature is an adverse circumstance against them in extending the discretionary relief of bail. Further, the involvement of these petitioners except the petitioner-Suresh Chandra Nayak and Ramjee Prasad Gupta in another case has not been disclosed in their bail applications and with regard to non-disclosure of alleged involvement of such petitioners in a criminal case of similar nature, it is considered apt to refer to the decision in ***Munnesh Vrs. State of Uttar Pradesh; 2025 SCC OnLine SC 1319***, wherein the Apex Court at Paragraph 9 of the decision has held as under: -

"9. xx xx xx, since the petitioner has suppressed material facts with regard to his involvement in criminal cases, he is not entitled to the discretionary relief of bail. xx xx"

It is also alleged that multiple candidates have reproduced answers in verbatim which tallied with the ***BLAPL Nos.1912 of 2026 and other cases***



supplied model answer sheets and the petitioner Suresh Chandra Nayak was the Director of the Agency at the relevant time of conduct of examination and in the course of investigation, the investigating agency has also analyzed the CDR of the phone numbers used by the petitioners. It is, however, claimed that no offence U/S. 111 of BNS is made out against any of the petitioners, but it is pre-mature to assess materials to reach such conclusion in a bail proceeding. Besides, the petitioners are in custody for some months and thereby, it cannot be said that the petitioners are in custody for a long period. Further, it is alleged against the petitioner-Satya Brata Mohanty for receiving Rs.3,00,000/- from the father of the candidate Ashutosh Biswal for assuring him success in the exam and there also allegation against him for retaining the original certificates of the candidate Ashutosh Biswal from his father as a security for payment of balance amount. The investigation against the petitioner- Satya Brata Mohanty is going on.



9. On coming to the interim bail plea of the petitioner-Himansu Sekhar Dash, it appears that he has sought for interim bail for the treatment of his sister, but the medical documents as furnished by the petitioner itself reveals that the sister of the petitioner had been to CMC Vellore even when the petitioner himself was in custody and the patient was also admitted to KIMS Hospital, Bhubaneswar on 13.05.2026 and discharged there from on 17.05.2026 and the admission form was signed by her mother as attendant. It, therefore, summarily found that the detention of the petitioner is not a hindrance for the treatment of his sister and her treatment is going on even if in the absence of the petitioner and, therefore, there is no merit in the alternative plea of the petitioner-Himansu Sekhar Dash.

10. In view of the above facts and taking into consideration the nature and gravity of the offences as alleged against the petitioners vis-à-vis the accusations sought to be brought against them and regard being



had to the materials so placed on record and there being allegation against the petitioners for leaking the question papers and supplying model answer sheets to the candidates by adopting unfair corrupt practices ultimately forcing the High Court to cancel the Main Recruitment Examination of ASO causing serious inconvenience to meritorious candidates at large and lastly, taking into account the role as alleged against the individual petitioner and the implication of some of the petitioners in similar type of offence for sabotaging other recruitment examinations, this Court is not inclined to grant bail to any of the petitioners.

11. Hence, these 14(Fourteen) bail applications of the Petitioners stand rejected. Accordingly, these BLAPLs stand disposed of. A soft copy of this judgment be immediately transmitted to the Court in seisin over the matter for reference.

(G. Satapathy)
Judge

*Orissa High Court, Cuttack,
Dated the 17th day of July, 2026/S. Sasmal*