



IN THE HIGH COURT OF ORISSA AT CUTTACK

ABLAPL No.4766 of 2026

Sunita Bhola

....

Petitioner(s)

Ms. Deepali Mahapatra, Adv.

-versus-

State of Odisha (VIG)

....

Opposite Party(s)

*Mr. Niranjana Mohara, SC
for the Vigilance Department*

CORAM:

HON'BLE DR. JUSTICE SANJEEB K PANIGRAHI

Order No.

01.

ORDER

08.05.2026

1. This matter is taken up through hybrid arrangement.
2. Heard learned counsel for the Petitioner and learned Standing Counsel for the Vigilance Department.
3. The Petitioner, apprehending her arrest in connection with Sambalpur Vigilance P.S. Case No.03 of 2026 corresponding to SBP Vig. G.R. Case No. 01 of 2026, pending in the Court of learned Special Judge (Vigilance), Sambalpur for the alleged commission of offences punishable under Sections 13 (2) read with Section 13(1)(b)/12 of the P.C. Act, 1988 has filed this petition under Section 482 of the BNSS for release on pre-arrest bail.

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Designation: P.A.
Reason: Authentication
Location: OHC
Date: 08-May-2026 20:30:13





4. Without going into the merits of the present petition filed by the Petitioner under Section 482 of the BNSS (erstwhile Section 438 of the Cr.P.C.) seeking direction for pre-arrest bail, this Court is to observe first that whether the petition under Section 482 of the BNSS is maintainable before this Court without exhausting remedy under the said provision before the Court of Sessions which has concurrent jurisdiction.

5. This Court has earlier decided the similar issue in the case of *Mitu Das and others v. State of Odisha*¹ observing that ordinarily, in case of petition under Section 482 of the BNSS, the remedy before the Court of Sessions ought to be exhausted before invoking the jurisdiction of the High Court.

6. The Supreme Court in the case of *Jagdeo Prasad v. State of Bihar and Ors.*² has categorically held as follows:

“6. However, before parting, we do wish to express our sincere concern with the haste at which the High Court has dealt with this matter. While the scheme of Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (now Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023) provides concurrent jurisdiction to the High Court and Sessions Court for entertaining applications for anticipatory bail, this Court has time and again

¹ vide order dated 26.04.2021 passed in ABLAPL No.5283 of 2021

² 2020 SCC OnLine SC 2108



observed that High Court should always encourage exhausting an alternative/concurrent remedy before directly interfering itself. This approach balances the interests of all the stakeholders, first by giving the aggrieved party a round of challenge before the High Court. Second, this approach provides the High Court an opportunity to assess the judicial perspective so applied by the Sessions Court, in concurrent jurisdiction, instead of independently applying its mind from the first go. Further, the High Court fails to record any reason for directly granting anticipatory bail without impleading the appellant-complainant as a party.

7. Having regard to the abovementioned facts and circumstances of the case, the serious nature of the allegations against accused respondents and the gravity of the offences alleged, we are of the view that the High Court was not justified in passing the impugned order granting anticipatory bail to the accused respondents."

7. In the case of **Rameschandra Kashiram Vora & Ors. v. State of Gujarat & Ors.**³, wherein the High Court of Gujarat held as follows:

"9.....I am in respectful agreement with the ratio of these two cases. I am of the opinion that it would be a sound exercise of judicial discretion not to entertain each and every application for anticipatory bail directly bypassing the Court of

³ 1986 SCC OnLine Guj. 56





Session. Ordinarily, the Sessions Court is nearer to the accused and easily accessible and remedy of anticipatory bail is same and under same section and there is no reason to believe that Sessions Court will not act according to law and pass appropriate orders. In a given case, if any accused is grieved, his further remedy to approach the High Court is not barred and he may prefer a substantive application for anticipatory bail under Section 438 or revision application under Section 397 of the Cr. P. C. to the High Court and the High Court would have the benefit of the reasons given by the Sessions Court. It would be only in exceptional cases or special circumstances that the High Court may entertain such an application directly and these exceptional and" special circumstances must really be exceptional and should have valid and cogent reasons for by passing the Sessions Court and approaching the High Court....."

8. In view of the above discussion, the applicant should approach the Sessions Court first then to the High Court like that is adopted in Section 483 of the BNSS (erstwhile Section 439 of the Cr.P.C.) The reasons for approaching the Court of Sessions first may be due to the following:

i) Whenever concurrent jurisdiction is provided under the statute simultaneously in two courts of which one is superior to the other, then it is



appropriate that the party should apply to the subordinate Court first, then he/she may seek his/her remedy in the High Court;

ii) The Sessions Court will always be nearer and accessible court to the parties. Moreover, considering the work load of the High Courts in the country and the cases of this nature are nothing but contributing to heavy pendency of cases. The applications under Section 483 of the BNSS (erstwhile Section 439 of the Cr.P.C.) often fail to get the required attention because of the docket arising out of such applications filed under Section 482 of the BNSS (Section 438 of the Cr.P.C.) directly in the High Court by passing the Courts of Sessions;

iii) The grant of anticipatory bail or regular bail requires appreciation, scrutiny of facts and perusal of the entire materials on record. In this context, if the Sessions Court has already applied its mind and passed the appropriate order, it would be easy for the High Court to look into or have a cursory glance of the observation made by the Sessions Court and dispose of the case with expedition.





9. However, under the Prevention of Corruption of Act, 1988 which is a special- contained and comprehensive code, designed to regulate and control offences relating to corruption, and to ensure stringent procedural and substantive safeguards in their adjudication. The Act confers exclusive jurisdiction upon the Special Courts constituted thereunder, empowering them to deal with all aspects of trial, including cognizance, inquiry, and adjudication of offences under the said statute. It has further been authoritatively echoed in the case of *In the matter of reference made by Shri Ravi Nandan Sahay, Sessions Judge, Patna, vide his letter No.2487 dated the 7th of July, 1987, under section 385(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973⁴*, wherein it was held that:-

25. The other part of sub-section (3) of section 5 of the P.C. Act of 1988 says that for the purpose of the said provisions, the Court of the Special Judge shall be deemed to be a Court of Session and the person conducting a prosecution before a Special Judge shall be deemed to be a Public Prosecutor."

80. In the light of discussions made and the reasons indicated above, I am of the considered opinion that the Special Judge appointed under the provision of the P.C. Act has no jurisdiction





to entertain and dispose of the anticipatory bail petition in relation to the offence punishable under the P.C. Act and the Court of Session (the Sessions Judge) has legal competence to consider any application for grant of anticipatory bail in relation to any offence including any offence punishable under any of the provisions of the Act.”

10. Similarly, in the case of ***V. Sridharan v. State by Deputy Superintendent of Police and Anr.***⁵, discussed the above mentioned Patna High Court judgment and held the following:-

“16. The Full Bench of the Patna High Court, on a reference to it by the Sessions Judge, Patna, relating to the competency of the Special Judge under the PC Act to entertain an application for anticipatory bail, by a 2:1 majority, held that the Special Judge, appointed under the Prevention of Corruption Act is jurisdictionally empowered to entertain an application for anticipatory bail.”

51. In view of the findings recorded above, this Court has no hesitation in holding that the Special Judge appointed under the Provision of PC Act has no jurisdiction to entertain an application u/s 438 Cr.P.C. for anticipatory bail in relation to an offence punishable under the PC Act and the Court of Session (Sessions Judge, who is the head of the Sessions Division)

⁵ 2020 SCC Online Mad 28049





alone is vested with jurisdiction and conferred with power to consider any application for grant of anticipatory bail in relation to any offence punishable under the PC Act.

52.....The Petitioner is permitted to move before the court of competent jurisdiction, viz., the Court of Sessions, viz., the Sessions Judge, who is the head of the Sessions Division, for anticipatory bail."

11.In view of the above, the Petitioner is granted interim protection for a period of three weeks to approach the Court of Sessions for seeking similar relief and the Court of Sessions/ Special Court (as the case may be) shall list this matter as early as possible before the expiry of three weeks of protection granted to the Petitioner.

12. In view of the above observation and direction, the ABLAPL is disposed of.

(Dr. Sanjeeb K Panigrahi)
Judge

Murmu

