IN THE HIGH COURT OF ORISSA AT CUTTACK

ABLAPL No.8557 of 2026
(CNR No. ODHC010531282026)
With
ABLAPL Nos.8559,8572,8649,8724 and 9141 of 2026
(CNR Nos. ODHC010531312026, ODHC010539602026, ODHC010539402026, ODHC010539312026, ODHC010580552026 respectively)

In the matter of applications under Section 482 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.

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Sri Debasish Kumar Das
(In ABLAPL No.8557 of 2026)
(CNR No. ODHC010531282026)
Sri S Balgopal
(In ABLAPL No.8559 of 2026)
(CNR No. ODHC010531312026)
Debika Pradhan
(In ABLAPL No.8572 of 2026)
(CNR No. ODHC010539602026)
Rashmita Sahoo
(In ABLAPL No.8649 of 2026)
(CNR No. ODHC010539402026)
Pritisnigdha Priyadarshini
(In ABLAPL No.8724 of 2026)
(CNR No. ODHC010539312026)
Shakti Prasad Das
(In ABLAPL No.9141 of 2026)
(CNR No. ODHC010580552026) ... ***Petitioners***

-versus-

State of Odisha ... ***Opp. Party***

Advocate(s) appeared in this case

For Petitioners	-	Mr. A.K. Mohapatra, Advocate (In ABLAPL Nos.8557, 8559 & 8649 of 2026) Ms. D. Mohapatra, Advocate (In ABLAPL No.8572 of 2026) Mr. H.P. Rath, Advocate (In ABLAPL No.8724 of 2026) Mr. S. Mohapatra, Sr. Advocate along with Mr. P. Mohapatra, Advocate (In ABLAPL No.9141 of 2026)
For Opp. Party	-	Mr.S. Panigrahi, Addl. Standing Counsel (In all ABLAPLs)

CORAM : MR. JUSTICE V. NARASINGH

DATE OF HEARING : 27.08.2026
DATE OF JUDGMENT : 03.09.2026

V. Narasingh, J.

1. Since all the ABLAPLs relate to EOW P.S. Case No.9 of 2026, on the consent of the parties, they are taken up together and are disposed of by this common order.

2. Heard learned Senior Counsel and learned counsel for the Petitioners and learned counsel for the State.

3. The Petitioners are seeking pre-arrest bail in connection with C.T. Case No.12 of 2026 pending on the file of learned Presiding Officer, Designated Court under OPID Act, Cuttack arising out of Economic Offence Wing P.S. Case No.09 of 2026 for commission of offences punishable under Sections 120-B[1]/ 420[2]/ 409[3]/ 419[4]/ 467[5]/ 468[6]/ 471[7]/ 477-A[8] of the Indian

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[1]**120-B. Punishment of criminal conspiracy**.—(1) Whoever is a party to a criminal conspiracy to commit an offence punishable with death, imprisonment for life or rigorous imprisonment for a term of two years or upwards, shall, where no express provision is made in this Code for the punishment of such a conspiracy, be punished in the same manner as if he had abetted such offence.
(2) Whoever is a party to a criminal conspiracy other than a criminal conspiracy to commit an offence punishable as aforesaid shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding six months, or with fine or with both.
[2]**420. Cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property**.—Whoever cheats and thereby dishonestly induces the person deceived to deliver any property to any person, or to make, alter or destroy the whole or any part of a valuable security, or anything which is signed or sealed, and which is capable of being converted into a valuable security, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.
[3]**409. Criminal breach of trust by public servant, or by banker, merchant or agent**.—Whoever, being in any manner entrusted with property, or with any dominion over property in his capacity of a public servant or in the way of his business as a banker, merchant, factor, broker, attorney or agent, commits criminal breach of trust in respect of that property, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.
[4]**419. Punishment for cheating by personation**.—Whoever cheats by personation shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.
[5]**467. Forgery of valuable security, will, etc**.—Whoever forges a document which purports to be a valuable security or a will, or an authority to adopt a son, or which purports to give authority to any person to make or transfer any valuable security, or to receive the principal, interest or dividends thereon, or to receive or deliver any

Penal Code, 1860 r/w Section 66-D[9] of Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008.

4. The allegations of the prosecution, instituted on a written report lodged by the Deputy General Manager and Zonal Head, Cuttack Zone, UCO Bank, reveal that there were serious financial irregularities in the

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money, movable property, or valuable security, or any document purporting to be an acquittance or receipt acknowledging the payment of money, or an acquittance or receipt for the delivery of any movable property or valuable security, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

[6]**468. Forgery for purpose of cheating**.—Whoever commits forgery, intending that the document or electronic record forged shall be used for the purpose of cheating, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.

[7]**471. Using as genuine a forged document or electronic record**.—Whoever fraudulently or dishonestly uses as genuine any document or electronic record which he knows or has reason to believe to be a forged document or electronic record, shall be punished in the same manner as if he had forged such document or electronic record.

[8]**477-A. Falsification of accounts**.—Whoever, being a clerk, officer or servant, or employed or acting in the capacity of a clerk, officer or servant, willfully, and with intent to defraud, destroys, alters, mutilates or falsifies any book, electronic record, paper, writing, valuable security or account which belongs to or is in the possession of his employer, or has been received by him for or on behalf of his employer, or willfully, and with intent to defraud, makes or abets the making of any false entry in, or omits or alters or abets the omission or alteration of any material particular from or in, any such book, electronic record, paper, writing, valuable security or account, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, or with fine, or with both.

[9]**66-D. Punishment for cheating by personation by using computer resource.—** Whoever, by means of any communication device or computer resource cheats by personation, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to one lakh rupees.

sanctioning, processing and disbursal in respect of 22 UCO Car Loans and 2 Business Loans, involving an amount of approximately Rs.325.43 lakhs (Rupees Three Crore Twenty-Five Lakhs Forty-Three Thousand only) during the relevant period.

5. Learned counsel for the State, Mr. Panigrahi, submits that the allegations of deliberate manipulation of Banking Records, fabrication and misuse of documents, creation of an artificial repayment history and diversion and siphoning of bank funds are under investigation, so also the role ascribed to each of the Petitioners.

Hence, they ought not to be protected by pre-arrest bail and to substantiate his claim, he relies on the following judgments:

i. ***P. Chidambaram v. Directorate of Enforcement***[10]
ii. ***Directorate of Enforcement v. P.V. Prabhakar Rao***[11]

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[10] *P. Chidambaram v. Directorate of Enforcement*, (2019) 9 SCC 24.
[11] *Directorate of Enforcement v. P.V. Prabhakar Rao*, (1997) 6 SCC 647.

iii. ***Y.S. Jaganmohon Reddy vs. Central Bureau of Investigation***[12]

iv. ***State of Gujarat v. Mohanlal Jitamalji Porwal***[13]

v. ***Nimmagadda Prasad v. Central Bureau of Investigation***[14]

6. Per contra, learned Senior counsel and counsel for the Petitioners submit that, since the allegations are essentially based on documentary evidence and the Petitioners have deep roots in the society, there is no scope for them to evade arrest or interfere with the ongoing investigation, which is also not the allegation of the prosecution.

7. It is his further submission that the Petitioner in ABLAPL No.8557 of 2026 (Debashis Kumar Das), the Petitioner in ABLAPL No.8572 of 2026 (Debika Pradhan), the Petitioner in ABLAPL No.8724 of 2026 (Priti Snigdha Priyadarshini), the Petitioner in ABLAPL No.8559 of 2026 (S. Balgopal) and the Petitioner in ABLAPL No.8649 of 2026 (Rashmita Sahoo) are employees of the

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[12] *Y.S. Jaganmohon Reddy vs. CBI*, (2013) 7 SCC 439.
[13] *State of Gujarat v. Mohanlal Jitamalji Porwal*, (1987) 2 SCC 364.
[14] *Nimmagadda Prasad vs. CBI*, (2013) 7 SCC 466.

Bank and the Petitioner in ABLAPL No.9141 of 2026 (Shakti Prasad Das) is the brother of the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das.

8. So far as Petitioner-Debashis Kumar Das, in ABLAPL No.8557 of 2026, is concerned, it is submitted by the learned counsel that the said Petitioner, while functioning as Assistant Manager, UCO Bank at Salepur Branch from December 2023 to November 2025, worked with the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das from March 2024 to February 2025.

During this period, a loan amount of Rs.8,60,000/- was granted in favour of one Durga Prasad Das. Though the application was incomplete, an amount of Rs.8,59,646/- was remitted to an SBI account, which ultimately found its way to the account of the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das.

Similar allegations have been levelled in respect of loans granted to Bikram Keshari Jena for an amount of Rs.9,49,823/- (M/s OSL Motors Pvt. Ltd.). Amount of Rs.9,99,823/- to Amulya Nayak and a loan sanctioned in favour of Sankar

Behera and Kabita Nayak to the tune of Rs.16.50 lakh, when the Petitioner (Debashis Kumar Das) was the Appraising Officer, against fabricated quotations of M/s Utkal Automobiles, and the money was automatically credited to the account of the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das.

Similar allegations also relate to one Abhimanyu Behera, who was sanctioned a loan of Rs.10,00,000/- and the same modus operandi was adopted to defraud the bank.

It is submitted by the learned counsel for the State that there is prima facie material regarding systemic diversification of the loan account of the principal accused. Hence, the Petitioners ought not to be protected by pre-arrest bail.

Learned counsel for the Petitioner, on the other hand, submits that he inevitably followed the instructions as received. Hence, no culpability can be attached to him and there is no money trail to his account. He may, therefore, be protected by pre-arrest bail.

9. So far as Petitioner-Debika Pradhan, in ABLAPL No.8572 of 2026, is concerned, it is submitted by the learned counsel that the Petitioner (Debika Pradhan), while she was posted as Assistant Manager at Salepur UCO Branch from April 2021 to September 2024, worked with the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das from April 2024 to September 2024.

The allegation against her is of opening savings bank accounts without proper genuineness of customers.

It is the submission of the learned counsel for the State that, notwithstanding that she lacked the sanctioning authority for the disbursal of loans, the role played by her in account opening and transaction-entry logs assumes significance in the light of the investigation into the larger conspiracy involving 22 UCO Car Loans and 02 Business Loans, as already stated. Hence, no leniency ought to be shown to her.

Learned counsel for the Petitioner in ABLAPL No.8572 of 2026 further submits that admittedly there is no money trail in the account of the Petitioner-Debika Pradhan and that she was not the sanctioning Authority and her case, therefore, stands on a different footing and she ought not to be denied pre-arrest bail.

10. So far as Petitioner-Pritisnigdha Priyadarshini in ABLAPL No.8724 of 2026 is concerned, it is submitted by the learned counsel that the Petitioner, while she was posted as Assistant Manager at Salepur Branch, UCO Bank from September 2024 to November 2025, worked with the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das, who was functioning as Branch Head. The Petitioner-Pritisnigdha Priyadarshini was responsible for customer identification, account opening, due diligence, verification of KYC documents and E-KYC creation, authorisation of retail customer IDs, creation and authorisation of new Savings Bank Accounts and entry/processing of financial transactions.

The allegation against the present Petitioner-Pritisnigdha Priyadarshini is that she failed to conduct E-KYC in accordance with the prescribed banking norms. Hence, her role is being probed in relation to the 22 UCO Car Loans and 2 Business Loans. On account of such allegations, the prayer for pre-arrest bail is registered.

Learned counsel for the Petitioner-Pritisnigdha Priyadarshini submits that, at best, the allegations against her are of procedural lapses. Hence, the Petitioner, being a lady, may be enlarged on pre-arrest bail.

11. So far as Petitioner-S. Balgopal in ABLAPL No.8559 of 2026 is concerned, it is submitted by the learned counsel that the Petitioner (S. Balgopal), during his incumbency as Manager (Advance-in-Charge), Salipur Branch of UCO Bank from July 2021 to August 2024, worked with the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das from February 2024 to August 2024. He was responsible for processing/recommending loan proposals and ensuring compliance with prescribed banking procedure.

Learned counsel for the State, on the basis of recitals of the Case Diary, submits that his role as Recommending Officer in multiple loan accounts, where essential borrower documents and supporting records were found to be fabricated or deficient, is the subject matter of investigation.

There is an allegation against him relating to the Car Loans of Deepak Kumar Behera, Shubranshu Sekhar Sahu, Samir Kumar Sahoo, Sankar Behera and Kabita Nayak.

Prima facie, the investigation indicates that fabricated quotations were used, while the amount involved, about Rs.16,50,000/-, was transferred to the account of the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das, though Finacle reflected the beneficiary as M/s Utkal Automobiles.

The prayer for pre-arrest bail application is opposed, inter alia, on the ground to probe the background in which the Petitioner- S. Balgopal ignored the apparent discrepancies.

The Petitioner's (S. Balgopal) plea is similar to those who were working in the bank, that he merely followed the instructions of the Branch Head and hence no complicity can be attached to him and he ought to be released on pre-arrest bail.

12. So far as Petitioner-Rashmita Sahoo in ABLAPL No.8649 of 2026 is concerned, it is submitted by the learned counsel that the Petitioner during her tenure as Assistant Manager at Old Secretariat Branch, Cuttack from August 2021 to July 2024, worked with the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das.

The allegation against her is that she sanctioned UCO Car Loans to Sunanda Das for an amount of Rs.9,50,000/-, to Sanghamitra Dash for an amount of Rs.15,00,000/-, to Basanta Kumar Routray for an amount of Rs.12,96,000/- and to Rajib Agrawal for an amount of Rs.38,98,000/-.

It is apt to note that, save and except in relation to Sunanda Das, where the Petitioner (Rashmita Sahoo) was the Recommending Officer, in all other cases, the Petitioner was the Appraising Officer.

13. So far as Petitioner-Shakti Prasad Das in ABLAPL No.9141 of 2026 is concerned, it is submitted by the learned Senior Counsel that the allegation against the present Petitioner-Shakti Prasad Das is on a different plane. He is admittedly the brother of the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das and further submits with vehemence that merely because he is the brother of the principal accused, he has been falsely implicated. Hence, he may be protected by pre-arrest bail.

14. It is the case of the prosecution that the Petitioner-Shakti Prasad Das had a Union Bank account and the said account received funds from the accounts operated by Shiba Prasad Das.

It is submitted by the learned State counsel that an amount of Rs.32,00,000/- was credited on 09.06.2022 to the Petitioner's (Shakti Prasad Das) Union Bank account and immediate debits of Rs.5,00,000/- each were made on 09.06.2022, 10.06.2022, 11.06.2022, 12.06.2022 and 13.06.2022 and Rs.2,00,000/- on 14.06.2022, as has come to light.

On the basis of the transaction trail, the prosecution seeks to establish prima facie that funds from the account of the Petitioner-Shakti Prasad Das were used for repayment of several disputed loan accounts and repeated transactions between the present Petitioner, the principal accused-Shiba Prasad Das and the borrower accounts would go to indicate that the Petitioner had connived with his brother and the money was routed through his account.

Per contra, learned counsel for the Petitioner submits that it is a case of false implication and only because he is the brother, he is being sought to be implicated, as already noted.

15. This Court perused the Case Diary, which prima facie indicates that loans were sanctioned by violating all norms and the prescribed procedure was followed in its complete breach and Savings Bank accounts of the borrowers were opened without any documentation at Salepur Branch, as follows:

Sl. No.	Account No	Name	Account Opening date
1	04290110177594	Durga Prasad Das	05.09.2024
2	04293211072195	Bikram Keshari Jena	08.05.2025
3	04290110179048	Amulya Nayak	01.02.2025
4	04290110178850	Ajit Kumar Subudhi	03.01.2025
5	04290110176368	Sankar Behera	29.06.2024
6	04290110178867	Gouranga Nayak	03.01.2025
7	04293211072188	Abhimanyu Behera	08.05.2025
8	04290110179819	Rajib Lochan Sahoo	29.04.2025
9	04293211072478	Cheeranjib Mohanty	19.05.2025
10	04290110176689	Deepak kumar Behera	18.07.2024
11	04290110174944	Shuvranshu Sekhar Sahu	30.03.2024
12	04290110176696	Samir Kumar Sahoo	18.07.2024
13	04290110178256	Ashutosh Mohapatra	04.11.2024
14	042901101708263	Soumya Ranjan Mallik	04.11.2024

And the total amount involved, as per the recitals of Case Diary comes to Rs.1,26,85,000/- (11 Loanees) and the break up the amounts as stated as under:

SN	Account No	Name	
1	04290110177594	Durga Prasad Das	Rs. 8.60 Lakhs
2	04293211072195	Bikram Keshari Jena	Rs. 9.50 lakhs
3	04290110176368	Sankar Behera	Rs. 16.50 lakhs
4	04290110178867	Gouranga Nayak	Rs. 10 lakhs
5	04293211072188	Abhimanyu Behera	Rs. 10 lakhs
6	04290110179819	Rajib Lochan Sahoo	Rs. 9.75 lakhs
7	04293211072478	Cheeranjib Mohanty	Rs. 9.20 lakhs
8	04290110174944	Shuvranshu Sekhar Sahu	Rs. 19 lakhs
9	04290110176696	Samir Kumar Sahoo	Rs. 16 lakhs
10	04290110178256	Ashutosh Mohapatra	Rs. 9.80 lakhs
11	04290110178263	Soumya Ranjan Mallik	Rs. 8.50 lakhs
	Total		Rs.1,26,85,000/-

And combined with the other amounts, the total defalcation comes to Rs.3.25 Crores.

16. The fraud perpetrated relates to UCO Bank, Old Secretariat, Cuttack and Salepur Branch, Cuttack, during the incumbency of accused-Shiba Prasad Das.

17. The submission of the learned counsel for the Petitioners that they have acted only at the behest of the said principal accused and, therefore, no complicity can be attached to them cannot be accepted at its face value, considering the role ascribed to them in processing the loans.

18. Admittedly, the investigation in the present case is continuing, and it involves an economic offence. It is stated to be at a crucial stage to unearth the larger conspiracy.

19. It is well settled by the Apex Court, that the approach for grant of bail, and more so in the case of pre-arrest bail, has to be different, in a case where the allegation is of commission of economic offence, as in the present case.

20. In fact, in the case of ***Serious Fraud Investigation Office v. Aditya Sarda***[15], the Apex Court has held that, unless exceptional circumstances are made out, pre-arrest bail in economic offences which affect the community at large and, in the process, the economy should not be granted.

21. This Court finds force in the submission of the learned counsel for the State, Mr. Panigrahi, that the investigation is at a crucial bend and, in fact, if the Petitioners are protected by pre-arrest bail, it may derail the ongoing investigation and their interrogation would become farcical, being ensconced by an order of pre-arrest bail.

In this context, reliance is placed on the judgment of the Apex Court in the case of ***State v. Anil Sharma***[16]**.**

22. This Court is conscious of parameter of grant of pre-arrest bail as setout in the

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[15] *Serious Fraud Investigation Office v. Aditya Sarda,* 2025 SCC OnLine SC 764.
[16] *State v. Anil Sharma*, (1997) 7 SCC 187.

judgment of the Apex Court in the case of ***Satender Kumar Antil v. Central Bureau of Investigation***[17]***.***

23. Considering the rival submissions in the light of the judgment of the Apex Court in the case of ***Aditya Sarda* (supra)**[15] treating economic offences on a different plane, this Court is not persuaded to hold that the Petitioners are entitled to the "exceptional remedy" of pre-arrest bail. Hence, all the ABLAPLs accordingly stand rejected.

24. Interim order stands vacated.

25. Accordingly, all the ABLAPLs stand disposed of.

(V. Narasingh)
Judge

Orissa High Court, Cuttack
Dated the 3rd September, 2026/Soumya
03.09.2026/*Uploaded*

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[17] *Satender Kumar Antil v. Central Bureau of Investigation*, 2023 SCC OnLine SC 452.