

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

CRIMINAL APPEAL NO. _____ OF 2026
(Arising out of Special Leave Petition (Crl.) No.7354 of 2025)

T. PRABHAKAR RAO

... APPELLANT

VERSUS

STATE OF TELANGANA

... RESPONDENT

O R D E R

Leave granted.

2. We have heard learned senior counsel for the appellant and learned senior counsel for the respondent-State.

3. During the course of their submissions, it has been brought to our notice that firstly, the appellant has been cooperating with the investigation and that the investigation is almost concluded and possibly in the next few weeks additional chargesheet may also be filed, *inter alia*, against the appellant herein.

4. In response to this submission, learned senior counsel for the appellant submitted that the petitioner has complied with the orders of this Court; that he has also received interim

protection during the pendency of this appeal before this Court. Therefore, in the facts and circumstances of this case, the interim protection may be made absolute and the appeal may be disposed accordingly.

5. Learned senior counsel appearing for the respondent-State submitted that in case this Court is inclined to accept the submission of the appellant, then, all questions of law which arise in this appeal may be kept open for which learned senior counsel for the appellant has no objection.

6. In the circumstances, by keeping all the questions of law open, we dispose of this appeal by making absolute the interim protection which was granted to the appellant herein initially by order dated 29.05.2025 and thereafter by subsequent orders which are extracted as under.

7. For ease of reference, we also extract the relevant orders under which we had directed the appellant to cooperate with the respondent-State in the investigation of the matter by which the appellant herein had surrendered and was taken into custody for two weeks and custodial interrogation also took place in the instant case.

1) Order dated 29.05.2025:

We have heard learned senior counsel for the petitioner and learned Solicitor General and learned senior counsel for the respondent(s).

Pending consideration of this Special Leave Petition, we direct the petitioner to appear before the concerned Investigating Authority/ Officer. For that purpose, the Passport/travel document(s) for travel only to India shall be made available to the petitioner by the Chief Passport Officer/Competent Authority so that he could appear before the concerned Investigating Authority/Officer within a period of three days on receipt of the Passport/travel document(s) to India.

Till the next date of hearing, no coercive steps shall be taken as against the petitioner.

The concerned Investigating Authority/Officer shall investigate the petitioner herein. The Investigating Authority/Officer shall submit Status Report of the investigation conducted, before this Court by the next date of hearing.

The petitioner shall also file an affidavit of undertaking within a week before this Court that within three days from the date of receipt of the Passport/travel document(s) only to India, he would return to India and appear before the concerned Investigating Authority/Officer.

It is needless to observe that the concerned Investigating Authority/Officer shall investigate into the offences alleged against the petitioner herein in accordance with law. The petitioner shall however cooperate with the investigation.

The issue regarding maintainability of the plea for anticipatory bail is left open to be considered at a later stage.

List on 05.08.2025.

2) Order dated 14.10.2025:

We have heard learned Solicitor General and learned senior counsel appearing for the respondent/State who has filed I.A.No.237540/2025 seeking the following reliefs -

"A. Issue Direction(s)/order(s) vacating the interim order dated 29.05.2025 as extended until date forthwith due to the conduct of Petitioner set out above; and

B. Strictly in the alternative, direct the Petitioner to furnish the true and correct ID passwords for iCloud/Cloud backups of digital devices submitted by him to the investigating agency, furnish the devices/drive details on which the backup of such digital devices was taken prior to formatting the submitted digital devices, and information sought in notice dated 03.09.2025 in the subject FIR No.243/2024;

C. Pass any other orders as deemed fit in the interest of justice."

We have also heard the reply arguments of learned senior counsel on such application at length.

During the course of submissions, learned Solicitor General appearing for the applicant/State has brought to our notice a note on the alleged formatting of digital devices and contended that as a result of the formatting of the digital devices, there is no purpose in the investigation of the petitioner who has the protection of the interim orders of this Court. The investigation and interrogation have not progressed till date owing to the petitioner taking advantage of the interim order of this Court and not disclosing the true facts.

In this regard, the following table was submitted by learned Solicitor General to contend that owing to the alleged formatting of the devices and the report submitted by the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in that behalf, there has been no meaningful investigation into the matter. He therefore, contended that custodial interrogation is required and therefore, the interim order dated 29.05.2025 as extended from time to time may be vacated, or alternatively a direction may be issued to the petitioner to furnish the true and correct passwords for iCloud/Cloud back-ups of digital devices submitted by him to the investigating agency, furnish

the devices/drive details on which the back-up of such digital devices was taken prior to formatting them and furnish the information sought in the notice dated 03.09.2025 in FIR No.243/2024.

The relevant portions of the note/table is extracted as under-

Sl. No.	Name of device and IMEI/Sl. No. of device	Date of submission before the IO	Date of formatting as per FSL and reference	Duration of use
1	1 st iphone	19.06.2025 at 1100 hours by A-I	05.04.2025 Device formatted on 05.04.2025 during pendency of Anticipatory Bail before HC.	13.01.2023 to 04.03.2024 [as per CDR] Data is not retrievable through FSL prior to formatting on 05.04.2025.
2	2 nd iphone	On 15.07.2025 at 1115 hours by A-I	15.07.2025 at 0908 hours During operation & in contravention of SC interim order dt. 29.05.2025.	04.06.2022 to 13.01.2023 [as per CDR] Data is not retrievable through FSL prior to formatting on 15.07.2025.
3	Samsung Galaxy	22.07.2025 at 1100 hours by A-I	FSL Report COM 219/2025 inter alia for Samsung phone states; Factory Reset on 06.10.2024 at 21:06:53	22.11.2023 to 11.03.2024 [as per CDR] Data not retrievable from date prior to

			Factory Reset on 04.08.2024 at 04:27:05 Formatted twice during the time when Petitioner, through his counsel, was participating in proceedings before the Ld. Trial Court in the instant FIR.	reset. Factory reset when he was absconding, staying in the US.
4	Official laptop- MacBook Pro	19.06.2025 at 1100 hours by A-I	Operating system was installed on 10.06.2025 implying reformatting that day. Device formatted during operation & in contravention of SC interim order dt. 29.05.2025.	Data is not retrievable through FSL prior to formatting on 10.06.2025. x Issuance of Laptop to Petitioner by SIB on 27.03.2023. This was his official laptop & was not returned by him upon his resignation on 04.12.2024

In response to the said submission, learned senior counsel Shri Dama Seshadri Naidu appearing

for the petitioner in the SLP/respondent in the application submitted on instructions that he would further co-operate in the investigation inasmuch as he would re-set and activate the password in the presence of the forensic experts insofar as his personal devices are concerned, in order to retrieve data stored in the iCloud/Cloud. He contended that whatever has been stored in the iCloud/Cloud has not been erased and therefore an opportunity may be given to the petitioner so as to further cooperate with the investigating agencies, by providing the requisite information with regard to aforementioned devices as well as by re-setting and activating the password of his personal devices in the presence of forensic experts, in order to locate the iCloud/Cloud backups of the personal digital devices.

It is needless to observe that as and when the petitioner in the special leave petition/ respondent in the application is summoned, he shall take steps to re-set and activate the password in the presence of forensic experts, as submitted by learned senior counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioner.

In the circumstances, we are inclined to grant only the second prayer sought for by the respondent-State/applicant in the aforesaid application.

Liberty is also reserved to the applicant/respondent-State in the special leave petition to seek information with regard to the following phone -

`Samsung Z Fold IMEI NO.354156122432885/
359662902432880'

It is further observed that since the aforesaid exercise is to be carried out by the State, we deem it just and proper to extend the protection that we have granted to the petitioner vide order dated 29.05.2025 and which has been extended from time to time till the next date of hearing.

List on 18.11.2025 at 2.00 P.M as a part-heard matter.

3) Order dated 11.12.2025:

We have heard learned senior counsel for the petitioner and learned Solicitor General and learned senior counsel appearing for the respondent(s).

In modification of our earlier orders, pending further consideration of this Special Leave Petition, we direct the petitioner to surrender before Sri P. Venkatgiri, ACP, SIT, Jubilee Hills Police Station, Hyderabad, on 12.12.2025 by 11:00 AM for the purpose of custodial Interrogation.

This is for the purpose of further investigation into the offences alleged against the petitioner herein in accordance with law.

Liberty is reserved to the petitioner herein to have food from his home as well as medication regularly during the interregnum period.

List on 19.12.2025.

4) Order dated 19.12.2025:

Learned Solicitor General and Sri Luthra, learned senior counsel appearing for the respondent-State have filed a status report pursuant to our order dated 11.12.2025 detailing the steps that have been taken in the interrogation of the petitioner herein. A prayer is made for continuation of the police custody of the petitioner for a period of one week so that interrogation may be completed.

We have heard learned senior counsel for the petitioner in response to the request made by the respondent - State as per the status report that has been submitted today.

We extend the police custody of the petitioner till 25.12.2025. On 26.12.2025 the petitioner shall be released from custody.

Since the matter is pending before this Court, no coercive steps shall be taken as against the petitioner herein from 26.12.2025 onwards till the next date of

hearing. However, the petitioner shall cooperate with the further investigation, if summoned.

The other directions contained in our order dated 11.12.2025 shall continue.

List on 16.01.2026.

5) Order dated 16.01.2026:

List on 10.03.2026 at 02:30 PM.

Interim protection granted earlier to the petitioner shall continue till the next date of hearing.

8. We accordingly allow and dispose of the appeal with the following directions:

1. In the event of arrest of the appellant, the Arresting Officer shall release the appellant on bail, subject to furnishing cash security in the sum of Rs.25,000/- (Rupees Twenty-Five Thousand only) with two like sureties.
2. The appellant shall extend complete cooperation in the ensuing investigation and trial, if any.
3. The appellant shall not misuse his liberty and shall not in any way influence the witnesses or tamper with the material on record.
4. The appellant shall surrender his passport with the concerned Trial Court.

5. The appellant shall not travel abroad without the permission of the Trial Court.

Any infraction of the aforesaid conditions may entail cancellation of anticipatory bail granted by this Court.

With the aforesaid directions, the Criminal Appeal is allowed.

....., J
(B.V. NAGARATHNA)

....., J
(R. MAHADEVAN)

NEW DELHI;
MARCH 10, 2026.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

CRIMINAL APPEAL NO(S). OF 2026
(@ SPECIAL LEAVE PETITION (CRL.) NO(S).7354 OF 2025)

T. PRABHAKAR RAO

APPELLANT

VERSUS

THE STATE OF TELANGANA

RESPONDENT

OPERATIVE PORTION OF THE ORDER

Leave granted.

Since we are granting the relief of anticipatory bail to the appellant herein, for the sake of convenience, the operative portion of the order shall be released today itself.

Appeal is allowed and disposed of with the following directions:

1. In the event of arrest of the appellant, the Arresting Officer shall release the appellant on bail, subject to furnishing cash security in the sum of Rs.25,000/- (Rupees Twenty-Five Thousand only) with two like sureties.
2. The appellant shall extend complete cooperation in the ensuing investigation and trial, if any.
3. The appellant shall not misuse his liberty and shall not in any way influence the witnesses or tamper with the material on record.

4. The appellant shall surrender his passport with the concerned Trial Court.

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Any infraction of the aforesaid conditions may entail cancellation of anticipatory bail granted by this Court.

With the aforesaid directions, the Criminal Appeal is allowed.

....., J
(B.V. NAGARATHNA)

....., J
(R. MAHADEVAN)

NEW DELHI
MARCH 10, 2026

ITEM NO.301/1

COURT NO.4

SECTION II

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

PETITION(S) FOR SPECIAL LEAVE TO APPEAL (CRL.) NO(S).7354/2025

[ARISING OUT OF IMPUGNED FINAL JUDGMENT AND ORDER DATED 02-05-2025 IN
CRLP NO. 4207/2025 PASSED BY THE HIGH COURT FOR THE STATE OF TELANGANA
AT HYDERABAD]

T. PRABHAKAR RAO

PETITIONER(S)

VERSUS

THE STATE OF TELANGANA

RESPONDENT(S)

IA NO. 162342/2025 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS

IA NO. 123339/2025 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING C/C OF THE IMPUGNED
JUDGMENT

IA NO. 162343/2025 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING O.T.

IA NO. 172402/2025 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION

IA NO. 138491/2025 - PERMISSION TO FILE ADDITIONAL
DOCUMENTS/FACTS/ANNEXURES

IA NO. 123340/2025 - PERMISSION TO FILE LENGTHY LIST OF DATES

Date : 10-03-2026 This matter was called on for hearing today.

CORAM : HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE B.V. NAGARATHNA
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE R. MAHADEVAN

For Petitioner(s) : Mr. Ranjit Kumar, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Dama Seshadri Naidu, Sr. Adv.
Dr. Aditya Sondhi, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Anurag Kulharia, Adv.
Dr. Navya, Adv.
Ms. Aakriti Jain, AOR

For Respondent(s) : Mr. Sidharth Luthra, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Kumar Vaibhaw, Adv.
Mr. Samba Siva Reddy, Adv.
Ms. Devina Sehgal, AOR
Mr. Kartikey Dang, Adv.
Ms. Somaya Gupta, Adv.

Mr. Basa Mithun Shashank, Adv.
Mr. Pramod Kumar Singh, Adv.
Mr. Manish Tiwari, AOR

M/S. Godavari Law Associates, AOR

UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following
O R D E R

Leave granted.

Appeal is allowed and disposed of in terms of the
signed order, which is placed on file.

Pending application(s), if any, shall stand disposed
of.

(B. LAKSHMI MANIKYA VALLI)
COURT MASTER (SH)

(DIVYA BABBAR)
COURT MASTER (NSH)

ITEM NO.301

COURT NO.4

SECTION II

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
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T. PRABHAKAR RAO

PETITIONER(S)

VERSUS

THE STATE OF TELANGANA

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Ms. Aakriti Jain, AOR
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For Respondent(s) : Mr. Sidharth Luthra, Sr. Adv.
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UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following
O R D E R

OPERATIVE PORTION OF THE ORDER:

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(B. LAKSHMI MANIKYA VALLI)
COURT MASTER (SH)

(DIVYA BABBAR)
COURT MASTER (NSH)

(REASONED ORDER SHALL FOLLOW)