

IN THE HIGH COURT FOR THE STATE OF TELANGANA

AT HYDERABAD

THE HONOURABLE SMT. JUSTICE K. SUJANA

CRIMINAL PETITION No.990 OF 2026

DATE: 25.02.2026

Between:

Ade Bapu Rao

... Petitioner/A.1

And

The State of Telangana,

Through Public Prosecutor,

High Court at Hyderabad

... Respondent/Complainant

ORDER

This Criminal Petition is filed praying this Court to enlarge the petitioner on bail who is arrayed as accused No.1 in POR No.1124 of 2023 of Jukkal Range (Forest Department), Kamareddy District. The offences alleged against the petitioner are under Sections 20(1)(c)(ii)(viii) and 44 of TS Forest Act, 1967 and Section 9 read with 2 (16), 32, 39 and punishable under

Section 51 of the Wild Life (Protection) act, 1972 as amended in 2023.

2. The facts of the case are that on 20.01.2026, the forest officials received information from villagers that a leopard had died in the fields of Bangarupally. Upon conducting a search and enquiry, they investigated whether the leopard had died due to electrocution or poisoning. An FIR was registered on the same day. Subsequently, it was discovered that in A.1's field at Dosthpally, a calf had been caught and half-eaten by the leopard. The leopard then died in A.2's field at Bangarupally, about half a kilometer away. It is alleged that A.1 and A.2 poisoned the leopard, and that they confessed to this before the authorities. Consequently, they were arrested and sent to judicial remand on 24.01.2026.

3. Heard M/s.M.Saraswathi Reddy, learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioner and Sri M.Ramachandra Reddy, learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing on behalf of the respondent - State.

4. The contention of learned counsel for the petitioner is that the he Forest Officials, in order to create fear among villagers and farmers, unnecessarily implicated Accused No.1. His calf

had died due to an attack by a leopard or a forest pig, and he was already distressed by the loss. The officials wrongly alleged that the leopard died after eating his calf. Since the leopard was later found dead in A.2 agricultural field in another village about half a kilometer away, A.2 was also falsely shown as accused. The petitioner is completely innocent. He has never committed any wrongful act against wildlife. He is only an agriculturist, with four small children, and no one else to look after his family, cattle, or agricultural work during the paddy season. All allegations against the petitioner are false and this case has been foisted only to cover up the officials' duty obligations. The Forest Officials, without proper investigation or enquiry, falsely implicated the petitioner based solely on a false complaint. The investigation in this case is almost completed except filing of charge sheet. Hence, prayed this Court to grant bail to the petitioner.

5. On the other hand, learned Additional Public Prosecutor opposed bail stating that during investigation, the officer learnt that a calf had been killed. On enquiry with villagers and the accused, both confessed that since their calf had died, believing it might have been killed by dogs or another animal they applied poison to the carcass. The leopard consumed the poisoned calf

and died as a result. Accordingly, A.1 and 2 were arrested on 24.01.2026 and remanded to judicial custody. It is further submitted that, during enquiry, the accused admitted to applying herbicide to the carcass of the calf. Petitioner confessed that he applied the herbicide in the presence of A.2, who also admitted to the act. It is evident that the leopard consumed the poisoned carcass, which led to its death. The incident is not a trivial matter but a grave violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Such acts pose a serious threat to biodiversity and the survival of protected species. Hunting or killing wild animals is a deliberate and gruesome act that undermines conservation principles and ultimately endangers mankind itself. It is further submitted that investigation is still in progress. The animal killed was a Schedule-I species under Part-A, S.No.43 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Knowing that the leopard would die after consuming the poisoned calf, petitioner committed the offence. He further submitted that the Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) is included under Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which provides the highest level of protection, on par with the Tiger and Asiatic Lion. This classification reflects the leopard's critical role in maintaining ecological balance. Hence, petitioner is not entitled for bail and prayed to dismiss this petition.

6. In the light of the submissions made by both the learned counsel and upon perusal of the material available on record, it appears that in the initial report the cause of death of the leopard was not clearly mentioned and the forest officials suspected electrocution or poisoning. Subsequently, it is alleged that the leopard died after consuming a poisoned calf said to have been treated with herbicide by the petitioner. However, the Post Mortem and chemical analysis reports are not yet received by the Investigating Officer. Therefore, at this stage, there is no conclusive material to establish that the death of the leopard was due to poisoning administered by the petitioner. As seen from the record, the petitioner has been in judicial custody since 24.01.2026. The substantial part of the investigation appears to have been completed. Considering the facts and circumstances of the case, the period of incarceration, and the stage of investigation, this Court deems it fit to enlarge the petitioner on bail subject to the following conditions:

- i. The petitioner shall execute a personal bond for a sum of Rs.25,000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Thousand only) each, with two sureties for a like sum each to the

satisfaction of the learned Judicial Magistrate of First Class, Bichkunda.

- ii. The petitioner shall appear before the concerned SHO at 11:00 a.m., on every Monday for a period of eight (8) week or till filing of charge sheet whichever is earlier, for the purpose of investigation, and thereafter, as and when required.
- iii. The petitioner shall abide by the conditions stipulated in Section 437(3) of Cr.P.C.(presently, Section 480(3) of the BNSS).

7. Accordingly, the Criminal petition is allowed.

Miscellaneous applications, if any pending, shall stand closed.

K. SUJANA, J

Date: 25.02.2026
SAI

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