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* IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI

% *Date of Decision: 21.01.2026*

+ **BAIL APPLN. 164/2026, CRL.M.A. 1393/2026 &**
CRL.M.A. 1420/2026

AMARDEEP SHARMAPetitioner

Through: Mr. Pradeep Kumar Arya, Mr. Gaurav Bhardwaj, Mr. Sachin Bajpai, Mr. Raj Karan Sharma, Mr. Aditya Kumar Yadav, Mr. Gaurav Chaudhry, Mr. Vaibhav Chaudhry, Mr. Anubhav Rathi, Ms. Arunima Singh and Ms. Akshika Chaudhary, Advocates.

Versus

CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONRespondent

Through: Mr. Ripudaman Bhardwaj, SPP with Mr. Kushagra Kumar and Mr. Amit Kumar Rana, Advocates.

+ **BAIL APPLN. 166/2026 & CRL. M.A. 1399/2026**

ARIHANT JAINPetitioner

Through: Mr. Hrishikesh Baruah, Mr. Sachin Bajpai, Mr. Anurag Mishra, Mr. Ayush Yadav, Mr. Aadarsh Singh, Mr. Ratnesh and Ms. Rajnandani Srivastava, Advocates.

versus



CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONRespondent

Through: Mr. Ripudaman Bhardwaj, SPP
with Mr. Kushagra Kumar and
Mr. Amit Kumar Rana,
Advocates.

CORAM:

HON'BLE DR. JUSTICE SWARANA KANTA SHARMA

JUDGMENT

DR. SWARANA KANTA SHARMA, J. (Oral)

CRL.M.A. 1394/2026 in BAIL APPLN. 164/2026

CRL.M.A. 1400-01/2026 in BAIL APPLN. 166/2026

1. Allowed, subject to all just exceptions.

2. Applications stand disposed of.

BAIL APPLN. 164/2026, CRL.M.A. 1393/2026 & CRL.M.A. 1420/2026

BAIL APPLN. 166/2026 & CRL. M.A. 1399/2026

3. By way of the present bail applications, applicants seek grant of anticipatory bail in case arising out of FIR bearing no. RC2212025E0016, registered at Police Station EO-III Delhi, for the commission of offence punishable under Sections 61(2)/318(4)/319 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (hereafter 'BNS') and Sections 43/66B/66C/66D of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (hereafter 'IT Act').

4. Brief facts of the case are that a source information was received by the investigating agency, to the effect that certain private entities, including M/s Lord Mahavira Services India Pvt. Ltd. (LMSIPL), had obtained bulk mobile SIM connections from Telecom



Service Providers in violation of the guidelines issued by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), and that such SIM cards were thereafter misused for cyber-crime and fraudulent activities. It was revealed that during the years 2024–2025, LMSIPL had obtained 7,721 SIM connections from Vodafone Idea Ltd., which were allegedly used for making fraudulent calls by impersonating officials of TRAI, law-enforcement agencies and other service providers, thereby cheating unsuspecting members of the public. Citizen feedback received through the *Chakshu* module of the Sanchar Saathi Portal recorded 210 complaints involving 189 mobile numbers linked to LMSIPL. In addition, financial fraud complaints involving a total loss of nearly ₹1 lakh, connected with six mobile numbers, were registered on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP). Although DoT had directed re-verification of these bulk connections, Vodafone Idea Ltd. reported that 5,884 out of 5,886 flagged numbers were found compliant, which appeared unusual in light of the complaints received.

5. On the basis of the said information, a Preliminary Enquiry bearing No. PE2212025E0003 was registered. During the enquiry, it was gathered that several mobile numbers issued to LMSIPL, including 7065006399, 7065434020, 7065438934, 7291874504, 8377839150 and 9990545326, were suspected to have been misused through SIM-box-like devices. The enquiry further revealed that LMSIPL, through its Directors, namely Arihant Jain and Amardeep Sharma, had obtained an extraordinarily large number of telecom



resources, amounting to 20,986 mobile connections from Vodafone Idea Ltd. between 2020 and 2025, by using deceitful means. These connections were obtained by furnishing identity documents of individuals projected as employees and end-users, including issuance of multiple SIM cards in the name of single subscribers. Records showed instances where 90 connections were issued for the end use of only 10 persons, and about 1,000 numbers were allotted for merely 143 persons on the basis of declarations made by Director Amardeep Sharma. CDR analysis of the said numbers indicated patterns consistent with SIM-box usage, as some numbers were found to have operated across 203 to 387 IMEIs and had generated one-second automated calls, pointing towards IMEI tampering, machine-to-machine communication and automated calling, all of which are prohibited under DoT guidelines dated 20.05.2024. During verification of NCRP complaints relating to certain mobile numbers through the Samanvaya Portal, it was found that each of the said numbers was linked to complaints of cyber-crime by victims. The preliminary enquiry revealed that both Directors of LMSIPL had obtained bulk SIM cards by providing false end-user lists, and that CDRs showed their usage around the registered address of the company in Delhi and an office premises in Noida. The pattern of IMEI usage suggested that the SIMs were being used in SIM boxes or automated systems capable of masking or switching IMEIs for illegal VoIP termination or mass messaging. It was also found that some of the mobile numbers issued to LMSIPL were directly involved in cyber-crime, as reflected from NCRP complaints. The



enquiry further indicated that unknown officials, distributors or dealers of Vodafone Idea Ltd. may have knowingly facilitated such activations despite clear procedural violations.

6. As per prosecution, the aforesaid circumstances *prima facie* disclosed large-scale violations of DoT guidelines and suggested that telecom resources obtained under the guise of business connections had been diverted for organised cyber-crime activities across states. The material collected indicated a criminal conspiracy involving Arihant Jain and Amardeep Sharma, Directors of LMSIPL, along with unknown officials or agents of Vodafone Idea Ltd., which enabled the use of fraudulently obtained telecom resources for cheating, impersonation, SIM-box operations and tampering with telecom identifiers. Consequently, the present FIR was registered.

7. The learned counsels appearing for the applicants argue that the core allegation that LMSIPL had made fraudulent calls by impersonating officials of TRAI and law-enforcement agencies is inherently untenable, as all 20,986 SIM cards obtained by LMSIPL are *SMS-only SIMs*, procured exclusively for promotional messaging, which are technically disabled from making or receiving voice calls and are restricted to SMS usage alone. It is further contended that the allegation of financial fraud involving about ₹1,00,000/- is implausible, as LMSIPL has been engaged in the business of tele-marketing and digital promotion for over 15 years and operates on a large scale, sending nearly 20 lakh SMSs daily through about 21,000 SIM connections, while paying monthly telecom charges of around



₹35 lakhs. In this backdrop, it is argued that an enterprise of such scale would not indulge in fraudulent activity for such a paltry amount. The learned counsels also submit that the Chakshu Portal is merely a citizen-reporting platform for suspected spam and does not involve any adjudication, verification of loss or determination of criminal intent. Even as per the prosecution case, the alleged fraud pertains to only six SIM numbers out of a total of 20,986 SIMs, which rules out any organised or systemic fraudulent activity attributable to LMSIPL. It is also contended that there is no allegation or material to suggest that the applicants intentionally subverted the KYC process or derived any unlawful gain, and at best, such allegations pertain to regulatory or contractual issues between the telecom service provider and the enterprise customer, for which civil or administrative remedies are available. With regard to the allegation of URL shortening, it is submitted that the same is a purely technical measure adopted to ensure that the promotional content and link fit within a single SMS, and the shortened links redirect to the same destination as the original links, without any alteration of content. It is further pointed out that despite extensive searches and investigation, no SIM box or any similar device has been recovered from LMSIPL or from any person associated with it. It is also submitted that the applicants have been implicated only by virtue of their designation as Directors or Authorised Signatory of LMSIPL, without attribution of any specific or overt act. The applicants have already joined the investigation and have cooperated with the



investigating agency, and therefore, their custodial interrogation is not warranted.

8. The learned SPP appearing for the CBI opposes the bail applications and argues that the applicants are the principal architects of a large-scale conspiracy involving fraudulent procurement and misuse of bulk SIM cards. It is argued that thousands of SIMs were obtained by deliberately furnishing false end-user details and by abusing the KYC process, with the full knowledge and involvement of both applicants. Statements of multiple end users establish that their identities were misused without consent. It is argued that several of the SIM numbers issued to LMSIPL have been linked to cyber-crime complaints, resulting in financial loss to victims. Further, the investigation has also revealed technical evidence of bulk SMS transmission through multiple IMEIs and devices, indicating deliberate circumvention of lawful telecom channels. It is submitted that the offence has serious societal impact and it undermines digital safety. It is stated that the investigation is at a crucial stage and custodial interrogation of the applicants is necessary to unearth the complete modus operandi and wider conspiracy, and grant of anticipatory bail would seriously prejudice the investigation. It is therefore prayed that the present bail applications be dismissed.

9. This Court has **heard** arguments addressed on behalf of the applicants and the CBI, and has perused the material on record.

10. The prosecution case, in brief, is that LMSIPL, under the control and direction of its Directors, i.e. applicants Arihant Jain and



Amardeep Sharma, had dishonestly obtained thousands of business SIM connections by furnishing false end-user details, in deliberate violation of DoT guidelines, and thereafter utilised such SIM cards for activities connected with cyber-crime.

11. This Court notes that the material collected during investigation shows that SIM cards were procured in the names of persons who were neither employees of LMSIPL nor aware of the issuance or use of such SIMs. Fourteen such end users examined by the CBI have consistently stated that they had never authorised issuance of SIM cards in favour of LMSIPL, nor had they received or used such SIM cards. Five of them have stated that their photographs and OTPs were obtained by Point of Sale agents under the pretext of KYC verification for their personal SIMs, and were later misused. Eight persons have stated that they were engaged only as freelance SKYC verifiers and were never employed as end users of the company. One employee stated that she had worked with LMSIPL for only 2-3 days and had never used any SIM card and that she was not aware that, during the KYC verification process, more than one SIM card had been issued in her name to LMSIPL. Clearly, at this stage, these statements recorded by the CBI *prima facie* establish fabrication of end-user lists and abuse of the KYC process by LMSIPL and the present applicants.

12. It is also significant to note that both the applicants, during investigation, have admitted that the end users projected as employees of LMSIPL were, *in fact*, never employed by the



company. While the applicant Arihant Jain allegedly sought to shift responsibility onto Vodafone officials and channel partners, he failed to produce any material to substantiate this claim or to explain how Aadhaar details of unconnected persons were collected and used for completing the KYC process. Similarly, the applicant Amardeep Sharma, despite being an authorised signatory for procurement of a large number of SIM cards, admitted that the end users were not employees and that the documents signed by him were supplied by Arihant Jain. He too failed to disclose the *modus operandi* adopted for obtaining and using the credentials of such persons.

13. In this regard, this Court also notes that the reply filed by the CBI, before the Sessions Court, points out that during the period 2024–2025, LMSIPL had as many as 176 persons engaged as employees; however, none of them were made end users for the purpose of obtaining SIM cards for the company's business operations. Instead, SIM cards were procured in the names of other persons who were never associated with the company in any capacity, and that too without their knowledge or consent.

14. Thus, the prosecution, on the basis of material collected during investigation, has specifically alleged that the applicant Amardeep Sharma, as authorised signatory, had furnished detailed end-user lists containing names, Aadhaar numbers and residential addresses of purported end users drawn from several States, including Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Bihar, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Delhi. It is



further alleged that in certain instances, end-user lists projected an unusually large number of persons from a single district, including about 300 individuals from Bulandshahr District, Uttar Pradesh, as employees of LMSIPL for the purpose of obtaining SIM cards. The applicant Arihant Jain, on the other hand, is the principal decision-maker who controlled and directed the affairs of the company and authorised the procurement of telecom connections through fraudulent means. The material on record, at this stage, thus *prima facie* establishes conscious involvement of both the applicants herein, and not a mere vicarious implication by virtue of their designations.

15. The aforesaid irregularities – in the procurement of SIM cards and fabrication of end-user details – will have to be examined in the light of what has emerged during investigation with regard to their subsequent use in cyber-crime activities. It is to be noted that the complaints received through the Chakshu Module and the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal reveal that several SIM numbers issued to LMSIPL were used for circulating deceptive messages relating to loans, sanctioned credit and financial inducements, pursuant to which some recipients reported having suffered monetary loss. The investigation has also revealed that bulk SMSs were transmitted using SIM cards operated across multiple IMEIs through data cards and dongles connected via USB hubs and messaging software. It has further emerged that the messages contained shortened links which redirected recipients to loan-related websites



or applications, where personal and sensitive information was collected.

16. The investigation in the present case is still at a nascent stage. The scale of operations, the number of SIMs involved, the spread of affected persons/victims across States, and the admitted inability of the applicants to explain the source and use of end-user credentials make custodial interrogation necessary for uncovering the full conspiracy, including the role of other facilitators.

17. This Court is also of the view that offences involving circulation of deceptive messages and links for financial inducements and online frauds are on the rise and pose a serious threat to public trust and digital safety. In such matters, where fraudulent procurement of SIM cards is alleged to have facilitated cyber-crime and financial loss to victims, the discretion of anticipatory bail must be exercised with due circumspection.

18. Given the seriousness of the allegations, the nature of the material collected during investigation, and the *prima facie* linkage of the applicants with offences involving misuse of telecom infrastructure for commission of cyber-crime activities, this Court finds no ground to extend the extraordinary protection of anticipatory bail to the applicants herein.

19. Accordingly, both the bail applications are dismissed. Pending applications also stand disposed of.

20. It is, however, clarified that nothing expressed hereinabove shall tantamount to an expression of opinion on merits of the case.



2026:DHC:745



21. The judgment be uploaded on the website forthwith.

DR. SWARANA KANTA SHARMA, J

JANUARY 21, 2026/ns

T.D.