



**Press Release**

**23/8/2023**

Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has arrested **Assistant Sub Insp (ASI) Chandrabhushan Verma, Chhattisgarh Police, Satish Chandrakar, Hawala operators Anil Dammani and Sunil Dammani** under the provisions of PMLA 2002 in the ongoing money laundering investigation into the Mahadev Book APP case.

ED had initiated money laundering investigation based on the FIRs registered by Chhattisgarh Police. Subsequently, other FIRs registered by Vishakhapatnam Police & other States have also been taken on record.

ED investigation in the Mahadev Online Book case has revealed that:-

- a. Mahadev Online Book provides online platforms for illegal betting in different live games like Poker, Card games, Chance games, betting on cricket, badminton, tennis, football etc, and also provide facility for playing a number of card games like TEEN PATTI, Poker, Dragon Tiger, Virtual Cricket games using cards etc., to even APPs allowing placing bets on different elections in India.
- b. Sourabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal who hail from Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, are the main promoters of Mahadev Online Book and are running their operations from Dubai.
- c. M/s Mahadev Book maintains various websites and operates a number of Closed Groups on Chat APPs. They advertise contact number over websites and lure people to play to earn profits. Such numbers can only be contacted over WhatsApp. Once a user contacts this number, he will be provided two separate contact numbers. One contact number is to be contacted for depositing money and collecting points in User IDs used to make bets. The second number is for contacting the website to encash the accumulated points in the designated IDs. The IDs are generally created on multiple websites like "laser247.com, laserbook247.com, www.betbhai.com, betbook247.com, tigerexch247.com, www.cricketbet9.com etc. depending on the need and preference of the "betters". These operations of collection of money, creation of User ID, distribution of User ID Credentials to the customer, and distribution of the money etc are done by Panel/Branch owners. Also, all the games are rigged in a manner that overall the Panel owners will not lose money and despite initial profits to the user, ultimately, they are likely to lose money.

- d. The betting app is operated by various "Panel/Branches", which are sold by Sourabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal like a small franchise. But they keep nearly 80 % of the profit of the panel operations. A panel has an owner and workers who are usually four in number. One person can own multiple panels. The main office being operated by Sourabh Chandrakar and Mr Ravi Uppal in Dubai is commonly referred to as "HO" or "Head Office" by the panel owners. Head Office creates 'profile' for the panel owner who can further create user profile of players/punters. Players have to deposit money in benami accounts shared online and then are assigned Panels by HO. Payouts are also done using benami Bank Accounts. These bank accounts are either opened fraudulently or are loaned for commission. Weekly sheets are shared with the panel owners by Head Office which contains statistics of all bets, total profit or total loss. Whatever be the final result of bets, 20 percent is the share of the panel operator and this amount is delivered to the panel owners either through banking channels or through hawala. Rest of the profits are appropriated by the Head Office. Bank accounts and WhatsApp numbers are changed frequently. Even if FIRs are registered, normally only the small level punters or Panel Operators are arrested. The main accused sitting abroad are out of the reach of the Indian law enforcement agencies.
- e. That as part of the operations, huge number of bank accounts in the name of unsuspecting people were opened by the promoters and Panel operators. That most of the bank accounts were opened in Chhattisgarh only. Multiple Call Centers are being run from abroad by the 'HO' to assist the players and Panel operators. That police and politicians despite observing the disastrous effect of illegal betting on youth and economy closed their eye to all these operations. The youth of Bhilai thronged to Dubai in huge numbers and after gaining experience in running back end operations would come back to India and open their own Panels.
- f. ED investigation has revealed that ASI Chandra Bhushan Verma was acting as the main liaisoner on ground in Chhattisgarh. He along with Satish Chandrakar was receiving hefty monthly money via Hawala from Dubai based promoters of Mahadev Online Book and were distributing the same to Senior Police Officers and leaders politically connected to Chief Minister's Office as '*protection money*'.
- g. ED investigation conducted so far has revealed that around 65 Crorecash amount was received by ASI Chandrabhushan Verma and he has kept his cut and distributed

bribes to Senior Police Officers and Politicians. ED investigation has revealed that although ASI Chandra Bushan Verma, is not a very senior officer in the Police hierarchy, but through his relationship with Vinod Verma (Pol Advisor to CM) and with the help of money power received from kickbacks sent by Ravi Uppal in Dubai, he has managed to influence senior officers.. ASI Verma has admitted before ED that he was receiving and paying large monthly bribes to many power people. ASI Verma has admitted that the bribe payments were enhanced after some action was done by Police in May 2022. The bribes were enhanced to water down the cases, to include non-bailable offences, and to restrict prosecution up to local punters and to prevent future action on their operations. Further, arrested accused have specifically named high ranking Officials connected to CMO who have received hefty kickbacks on monthly/regular basis.

Searches were conducted at multiple locations by ED on 21.8.2023 & 23.8.2023 and huge amount of incriminating documents have been seized. The arrested accused persons have admitted to their role and have given trail of the bribes and list of the beneficiaries of these bribes. The accused were arrested and produced before the Hon'ble PMLA Special Court Raipur who has remanded all the 4 accused persons to ED Custody for 6 days.

Further investigation is under progress.

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