

BAIL MATTER 1275/26
STATE VS DEEPAK VATS
e-FIR NO. 29/2026
PS : SPECIAL CELL
U/S 308/318(4)/319/340 BNS

09.06.2026

Present :Sh. Rahul Kumar & Ms. Pooja Chauhan, Advocates for
Applicant/Accused.
Sh. Santosh Kumar, Ld. APP for the State.
SI Ajit Dadarwal, IO, IFSO Special Cell.

ORDER

1. The present 1st Bail Application under Section 483 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS) has been filed on behalf of the applicant/accused Deepak Vats, S/o Late Sh. Rajender Kumar, presently in judicial custody since 15.05.2026, seeking regular bail in connection with E-FIR No. 29/2026, registered at P.S. Special Cell, IFSO, Delhi, under Sections 308, 318(4), 319 and 340 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS).
2. The First Information Report in the present matter was registered on 01.02.2026 on the basis of the complaint lodged by one **Diksha Devi**, D/o Ravi Kumar, a domestic worker. The complainant Diksha Devi alleged that she was cheated by an unknown person through an online dating application and online fraud totalling Rs. 52,81,999/-. However, a closer examination of the facts and documents placed on record reveals that the complainant Diksha Devi is, in fact, the maid employed by **Ms. Harshali Chowdhary**, a Judicial Officer serving in Haryana. It is a matter of record, borne out by the bank statement, that the overwhelming majority of the transactions — all except the final cash deposit of Rs. 5,00,000/- — were made not from the accounts of the complainant

Diksha Devi, but directly from the accounts of Ms. Harshali Chowdhary, who is the actual and real victim in the present matter.

3. As per the case of the applicant/accused, Deepak Vats and Harshali Chowdhary became acquainted through a dating application known as Tinder. According to the accused, it was Harshali Chowdhary who initiated contact from a pseudo profile titled "Altruistic Joy" and the parties thereafter developed a consensual romantic relationship from 23.11.2025 onwards. The accused claims that all financial transfers were made voluntarily by Harshali Chowdhary; that she herself proposed depositing funds into an online gaming/betting account maintained in his name for entertainment purposes; that the parties met physically on two occasions at Drishti Dreamscapes, Saket, New Delhi; and that the complaint was filed falsely through the maid Diksha Devi when the relationship turned sour.
4. The Investigating Officer, SI Ajit Dadarwal, IFSO Special Cell, has opposed the bail application, stating inter alia that: (i) the accused is involved in a well-organised, pre-planned cyber fraud of Rs. 52,81,999/-; (ii) the accused introduced himself as "Abhimanyu Vashishth", falsely claiming to be an officer in a secret government department, thereby inducing victims with assurances of high returns on investment; (iii) of the total amount defrauded, Rs. 31,50,000/- was directly transferred to the accused's Karur Vysya Bank Account No. 4102178000002284; (iv) Rs. 16,31,999/- was routed through multiple credit card transactions which ultimately landed in the same account of the accused; (v) Rs. 5,00,000/- was deposited in cash in Axis Bank Account No. 922020001713522, an account provided by the accused; (vi) the accused has deliberately refused to provide the mobile phone password, impeding investigation; and (vii) the accused has criminal antecedents, having been

named in FIR No. 62/2019 PS Gazipur under Section 420 IPC. It has been submitted that investigation is at an initial stage and there is a grave risk of the accused tampering with evidence and influencing witnesses if released on bail.

5. A prior bail application filed by the accused before the Ld. ACJM, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi was dismissed on 26.05.2026, vide order passed by ACJM-02, New Delhi District, wherein it was observed that prima facie a case was made out against the applicant/accused. The present bail application has been filed before this Court on 28.05.2026.
6. I have heard the arguments of the Ld. Counsel for accused, the Ld. APP for the State and the Investigating Officer, and have perused the entire record, including the bail application, affidavit, copy of FIR, bank account statements, WhatsApp chat records, pay-in slip, prior bail dismissal order, and the police file.

7. **FINDINGS OF THE COURT:**

- 7.1. The singular and most striking aspect of this case, which has not escaped the notice of this Court and which requires to be placed on record squarely, is that while the complaint has been filed in the name of the domestic help **Diksha Devi**, every material transaction that forms the substratum of the alleged fraud was made not from Diksha Devi's account, but from the accounts of her employer, **Ms. Harshali Chowdhary**, a serving Judicial Officer. The IO has himself confirmed before this Court that Rs. 31,50,000/- was directly transferred from the SBI and IndusInd bank accounts standing in the name of Harshali Chowdhary to the accused's Karur Vysya Bank account. The first transaction of Rs. 1,000/- on 05.12.2025 originated from an IndusInd Bank account. Thereafter, the cascade of transactions continued — largely from Harshali Chowdhary's accounts — until the last transaction,

a cash deposit of Rs. 5,00,000/- on 13.01.2026. Diksha Devi, the complainant, did not initiate or make a single digital payment throughout the entire period. This Court is constrained to record that the complaint as filed does not seem to reflect the true complainant.

7.2. The applicant/accused has placed on record WhatsApp chats of the relevant period, particularly 05.12.2025 through subsequent dates recovered using the WAMR application. This Court has carefully examined these chats. A critical and immediately perceptible deficiency in the chats placed on record is that they are entirely **one-sided** — they show only what was **written by the victim Harshali Chowdhary** and received by the accused, and contain absolutely **nothing of what was sent by the accused** to the victim. In other words, the accused has selectively produced only the messages sent by the victim while carefully withholding all responses and communications sent by himself. This selective production is inherently suspicious and, in the considered opinion of this Court, betrays a deliberate intent to suppress and conceal material communications.

7.3. This suspicion is further compounded by the fact that, as confirmed by the Investigating Officer, the accused has deliberately refused to provide the password to his mobile phone which has been seized in this case. The mobile phone is currently under analysis. The question that inevitably arises before this Court is this: if the accused is genuinely innocent and the transactions were consensual as claimed, and if he was able and willing to selectively produce one-sided chats showing communications made by the victim — why has he withheld his own communications to the victim? Why has he not placed on record the e-cash vouchers that would demonstrate that the funds were transferred to a third-party exchanger for online betting? If

the entire amount had indeed "vanished" in the betting application, what prevents the accused from opening that application before the investigating agency to demonstrate that the money was lost in gaming, and that the victim was equally involved? The conspicuous absence of any such corroboration, combined with the refusal to open the mobile phone, leads this Court to draw the inference that the accused is actively concealing material evidence.

7.4. The correlation between the WhatsApp chats of the victim Harshali Chowdhary (as filed by the accused) and the financial transactions reflected in the bank statement of the accused is revealing and is tabulated below for ready reference:

S.No.	Date & Time (WhatsApp Chat)	Material Chat Content (By Victim Harshali Chowdhary)	Corresponding Transaction (From Accused's Bank Statement)
1.	05.12.2025 03:39 PM	"Detail bhej abhi" (Asking accused for account details to transfer money)	Transaction credit pending; victim requesting payment details from accused
2.	05.12.2025 03:48 PM	"I transferred 1000 rs now" (Victim confirms first transfer)	₹1,000/- credited to accused's KVB A/c from IndusInd Bank A/c No. 100054108436 (HARSHALI CHOWDHARY-INDB) 05.12.2025, 15:43 hrs

S.No.	Date & Time (WhatsApp Chat)	Material Chat Content (By Victim Harshali Chowdhary)	Corresponding Transaction (From Accused's Bank Statement)
3.	05.12.2025 03:49 PM	"Mere saare accounts gpay se linked hain..." (Victim informing all accounts are linked to GPay)	Context for ensuing rapid digital transfers via UPI/GPay
4.	05.12.2025 03:50 PM	"Today I will transfer 49k more" (Victim undertaking to transfer ₹49,000 same day)	₹49,000/- credited to accused's KVB A/c from IndusInd Bank (HARSHALI CHOWDHARY-INDB) 05.12.2025, 16:06 hrs
5.	05.12.2025 04:19 PM	"So 2 lakh aur karne hai" (Victim acknowledging obligation to transfer ₹2 lakh more)	Followed by additional transfers on 06.12.2025 and 07.12.2025 bringing total to ₹2,50,000/- in the first three days
6.	06.12.2025	Further intimate communications between the parties (not reproduced here in deference to the dignity of the Court record)	₹50,000/- (from IndusInd Bank, HARSHALI CHOWDHARY) ₹50,000/- (from SBI Bank A/c No. 11504616255, HARSHALI CHOWDHARY) 06.12.2025

S.No.	Date & Time (WhatsApp Chat)	Material Chat Content (By Victim Harshali Chowdhary)	Corresponding Transaction (From Accused's Bank Statement)
7.	07.12.2025 09:05 AM	Intimate messages from victim expressing deep emotional attachment (not reproduced)	₹50,000/- + ₹50,000/- (HARSHALI CHOWDHARY-INDB) 07.12.2025, 09:53 hrs & 12:23 hrs
8.	07.12.2025 09:57 AM	"Confirm 50k I sent now!" (Victim confirming transfer of ₹50,000/-)	₹50,000/- credited (HARSHALI CHOWDHARY- INDB-10005)
9.	09.12.2025 10:19 AM	"Tere hi account main daalungi na" (Victim affirming she will deposit into accused's account) "1 lakh transfer kar diya hsi" "I can't transfer 50k today. Kal karungi!"	₹50,000/- + ₹50,000/- (HARSHALI CHOWDHARY-INDB & SBIN) ₹1,000/- + ₹1,000/- + ₹1,98,000/- (SBI A/c, HC) 09.12.2025
10.	15.12.2025 01:22 PM & 01:46 PM	"Confirm 1000" "Transferred 6,99,000. Neft." "Will transfer remaining tomorrow"	₹1,000/- (NEFT, HARSHALI CHOWDHARY) ₹6,99,000/- (NEFT, HARSHALI CHOWDHARY-Deepak Vats) 15.12.2025
11.	16.12.2025 07:21 AM	"Sent 6 lakhs Neft. Confirm when you get time!"	₹6,00,000/- (NEFT CR, HARSHALI

S.No.	Date & Time (WhatsApp Chat)	Material Chat Content (By Victim Harshali Chowdhary)	Corresponding Transaction (From Accused's Bank Statement)
			CHOWDHARY-Deepak Vats) 16.12.2025, 07:32 hrs
12.	06.01.2026 & 07.01.2026	Continued communications (Multiple transactions from SBI A/c marked "Gift to" and "Others" in bank statement)	06.01.2026: ₹2,50,000/- + ₹2,50,000/- + ₹1,00,000/- (marked "Gift to") 07.01.2026: ₹2,50,000/- + ₹2,50,000/- + ₹1,00,000/- (marked "Others") From SBI A/c No. 11504616255
13.	13.01.2026	<u>Cash deposit — NOT from Diksha Devi directly, but deposited by "Ashish", court staff/peon of Harshali Chowdhary</u>	₹5,00,000/- CASH deposited by "Ashish" into Axis Bank A/c No. 922020001713522 (account of Kundan Kumar provided by accused) Nar naul Branch, dated 13.01.2026 .

7.5. An examination of the WhatsApp chats dated 05.12.2025, placed on record by the accused as Annexures (recovered using the WAMR application), in juxtaposition with the corresponding financial transactions reflected in the accused's Karur Vysya Bank account statement paints a vivid

and revealing picture. At 03:39 PM on 05.12.2025, the victim asks for payment account details; she transfers Rs. 1,000/- at 03:48 PM; at 03:49 PM she informs the accused that all her accounts are linked to GPay; at 03:50 PM she commits to transferring Rs. 49,000/- more; and she then proceeds to make repeated, escalating transfers across multiple subsequent days, ultimately totalling several lakhs of rupees. The chats placed on record from the subsequent days — from 05.12.2025 through 07.12.2025 and beyond — show communications of a deeply personal and intimate nature between two adults. This Court is conscious of the dignity of the parties and the public nature of this record, and accordingly refrains from reproducing the specific content of those intimate messages. However, the nature and tenor of those communications leave this Court in no doubt that the chats are those of two persons who were in a relationship of deep emotional and physical intimacy. It is in this context that the financial transactions must be read.

7.6. In the considered view of this Court, the pattern of financial transactions correlating so precisely and immediately with the WhatsApp communications is consistent with the hypothesis of a **honey trap**. This Court has, during the course of proceedings in numerous cyber fraud matters over the year, encountered a regrettable pattern in which individuals — including senior civil servants, professionals, and business persons of standing — have been ensnared in digital arrest, investment fraud or romantic honey traps. The modus operandi is distressingly familiar: initial contact through a dating application, rapid and intensive emotional escalation, the development of deep personal intimacy, and then the progressive extraction of money, often presented as investments, gifts, or shared ventures. The present matter bears all the hallmarks of this pattern.

The accused himself, through the very chats he has chosen to place before this Court, has established the existence of a romantic relationship and the victim's progressive financial transfers. The booking at **Drishti Dreamscapes, Saket, New Delhi** — confirmed in the WhatsApp message of 08.12.2025 (Annexure-B) — and the two physical meetings claimed by the accused himself, are further consistent with this pattern.

8. COMPLETE ABSENCE OF ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE FROM THE VICTIM/COMPLAINANT SIDE:

8.1. This Court is constrained to record, with considerable concern, a fundamental and glaring lacuna in the investigation that has not been adequately addressed: to date, **not a single piece of electronic evidence has been furnished, collected, or placed on record by or from either the complainant Diksha Devi or the victim Harshali Chowdhary.** The entire corpus of electronic communications before this Court consists solely and exclusively of what the accused has chosen to produce — and, as noted, even that is deliberately partial and one-sided. This Court finds it necessary to articulate this deficiency with clarity:

a) **TINDER CHATS:** The prosecution's own case, as detailed in the IO's report, is that the accused made initial contact through the Tinder application. However, till date, neither the complainant Diksha Devi nor the victim Harshali Chowdhary has produced her Tinder account records, her Tinder chat history, or even basic profile details. The Tinder application retains chat history for extended periods and this information was plainly available and retrievable — yet no effort appears to have been made to obtain it. The IO has not placed on record any application made to Tinder's service provider for preservation or disclosure of data,

nor has any preservation request been made qua the Tinder profiles involved. This is a foundational evidentiary gap in a case where the very origin of the relationship is disputed.

b) **WHATSAPP CHATS FROM THE VICTIM'S DEVICE:** The chats placed before this Court have been recovered by the accused using the WAMR application from his own device, and show only the messages received by him — i.e., messages sent by Harshali Chowdhary to the accused. This Court has not been shown a single screenshot, printout, or extraction from Harshali Chowdhary's own mobile phone. Harshali Chowdhary's device would contain the complete chat thread — including both what she sent to the accused and what the accused sent to her. It is precisely the messages sent by the accused to Harshali Chowdhary that are most material: it is those messages that would reveal whether the accused induced the victim through false promises, or misrepresentation — the very ingredients of the alleged offence. Yet, the IO has not obtained, nor apparently attempted to obtain, the WhatsApp data from the victim's device or WhatsApp account.

c) **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS OF DIKSHA DEVI:** The FIR is registered on the statement of Diksha Devi, who claims to have been cheated by an unknown person through a dating application. If Diksha Devi was independently deceived — as the FIR states — her own device should contain the communications through which she was deceived. Yet, not a single chat, message, or electronic communication from Diksha Devi's phone has been placed before this Court. The IO has not explained this absence, and it appears no attempt has been made to extract data from Diksha Devi's mobile phone.

d) **CALL DATA RECORDS:** The IO has not placed before this Court any call data records (CDRs) of either the complainant, the victim, or the accused for the relevant period. Call logs would have independently corroborated or contradicted the claimed nature and frequency of the relationship, and would have revealed the pattern of communication between the parties. IDPA would have further clarified the same.

e) **ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE FROM THE RECEIVER:** The bank statement of the accused shows multiple large debits to "Lakshyatatabux Technologies-IDFB" and "Shopperoo Vault Private Limited", identified as entities used for routing funds towards online betting. The IO has not produced any data, identity, or investigation qua these entities. No application appears to have been made to the concerned payment gateways or intermediaries for transaction records, nor has any effort been made to identify the operators of these platforms or recover the funds.

8.2. The IO's conduct in the present case, when viewed against this backdrop, raises serious questions. The investigating agency is in possession of the accused's seized mobile phone. This Court is informed that despite having the phone in custody since 15.05.2026, the IO has been unable to access its contents due to the accused's refusal to provide the password. While the phone is under analysis, there is no explanation for why the IO has been equally passive in obtaining electronic data from **the other side** — from the victim and the complainant. Unlike the accused's phone (which requires cracking a password), the victim Harshali Chowdhary and the complainant Diksha Devi are cooperating witnesses. Their devices are freely accessible. Their WhatsApp chat histories, Tinder data, and call records were and

remain available for collection. The IO has offered no explanation for not having obtained this material. This Court can only observe that the IO appears to have proceeded on the assumption that the complainant's account is accurate, without subjecting it to independent verification through the available electronic evidence. Such an approach is inconsistent with the standard of professional and impartial investigation that a case of this nature demands.

8.3. This Court must also observe that a judicial officer — Harshali Chowdhary — is involved in this matter as the real and principal victim. It is well recognised that when a person of standing and responsibility in the justice delivery system is involved in a criminal matter, the highest standard of transparency and forthcoming disclosure is expected. Harshali Chowdhary, being a member of the judicial service, is expected to be fully aware of the importance of electronic evidence in cyber fraud investigations. She holds the data on her own device that is most crucial to this case. The fact that she has, to date, neither volunteered nor been called upon by the IO to produce her own Tinder profile data, her complete WhatsApp chat history with the accused, and her call data records, is a matter of considerable concern. If the victim truly intends to bring the accused to justice, the surest path to that outcome is full and immediate disclosure of all communications. Selective silence or strategic presentation of evidence serves neither the cause of justice nor the victim's own stated objective.

8.4. Turning specifically to the cash deposit of Rs. 5,00,000/-: When this Court sought clarification on 01.06.2026 regarding the Axis Bank pay-in slip showing a cash deposit on 13.01.2026 at Narnaul Branch, the IO submitted that this amount belonged to the complainant Diksha Devi, allegedly

accumulated by her over time, and was deposited by "Ashish", the court peon of Harshali Chowdhary, on her behalf. This Court **does not accept this explanation at face value**. The explanation is inherently implausible and, in the opinion of this Court, requires thorough independent investigation rather than mere acceptance of the complainant's say-so. The reasons for this Court's scepticism are manifold:

- a) Diksha Devi is a domestic worker. The claim that she had accumulated Rs. 5,00,000/- in cash — five lakh rupees — from her earnings as a maid is not credible on its face, particularly when it is noted that she did not contribute a single rupee to any of the earlier digital transactions. If she had savings of five lakh rupees in cash, the natural expectation would be that some portion of the earlier payments too would have come from her. They did not.
- b) The deposit was made by "Ashish", the court peon of Harshali Chowdhary, at the Narnaul branch of Axis Bank. The deposit bears his signature. Narnaul is a town in Mahendergarh District, Haryana — the State in which Harshali Chowdhary is posted as a Judicial Officer. The most obvious inference is that this cash, deposited from Haryana by the court peon of a Haryana judicial officer, was sourced from Harshali Chowdhary and not from Diksha Devi.
- c) This cash was deposited directly into an Axis Bank account bearing number 922020001713522, which the IO has confirmed is not the account of the accused Deepak Vats but the account of the third-party. This further complicates the narrative: even if one were to accept, for the sake of argument, that the cash belonged to Diksha Devi, the fact that it was deposited by the court peon of Harshali Chowdhary into an account

known to the accused as the exchanger's account strongly suggests that this transaction was coordinated with the knowledge and involvement of Harshali Chowdhary.

d) The IO appears to have accepted the complainant's statement on this point without independent verification. No inquiry appears to have been made regarding the source of this cash — whether it was withdrawn from a bank account of Diksha Devi, or of Harshali Chowdhary, or some other person. In a case where the truth of each transaction is in dispute, the IO's uncritical acceptance of an implausible explanation represents a significant investigative failure.

8.5. Equally, this Court cannot overlook the accused's own pattern of selective disclosure and concealment, which this Court characterises as a game of **hide and seek** that serves neither the accused's interests nor the cause of justice. The accused has placed before this Court only those WhatsApp messages that were sent **to** him by the victim — materials recovered through the WAMR app from his own device. He has produced nothing of what he **himself** wrote and sent to Harshali Chowdhary. He has not placed on record: (a) any communication sent by him to the victim at any point; (b) the e-cash vouchers that would demonstrate the onward remittance to the exchanger; (c) the online gaming/betting application, which would show whether the funds were actually used for gaming and lost; (d) the banking trail from the exchanger's account showing how the money was deployed; or (e) any record of his Tinder profile or his communications on that platform.

8.6. This Court notes, with emphasis, that the accused's selective presentation of evidence is not merely a procedural deficiency — it goes to the heart of

his claim of innocence. If the accused's version is true — namely, that the victim herself proposed the online gaming arrangement, that the money was sent to an exchanger and used for betting, and that the entire amount was lost in the course of gameplay with the victim's knowledge and consent — then **all of this evidence would exist and would be entirely in the accused's favour**. There would be no incentive to suppress it. The very act of suppression raises the inference that this evidence, if produced, would tell a different story. This Court, having seen the pattern of selective disclosure in numerous cyber fraud cases, is experienced enough to recognise that those who suppress evidence in a bail application often do so precisely because the full picture is adverse to them.

8.7. This Court is, however, mindful of the legal position that adverse inferences from non-disclosure cannot by themselves be a ground to be considered at the present stage of bail. Nevertheless, the suppression of evidence is a relevant factor in assessing the accused's bona fides and the risk of evidence tampering if bail is granted. It is also a factor relevant to the Court's assessment of the credibility of the defence version at this stage.

8.8. This Court wishes to clarify, however, that an avenue is available to the accused if he genuinely believes that the contents of his mobile phone will exonerate him. The accused **may approach the learned Magistrate Court and make an application for his mobile phone to be opened in the presence of the Court**, with the IO and counsel for both sides present, so that the relevant data — including his own messages to the victim, the gaming application, the exchanger transactions, and any other material — can be examined in a transparent and supervised manner. Such a course of action would be entirely consistent with an innocent accused who has nothing to hide, and

would go a long way towards unravelling the truth. **A genuinely innocent accused should have no hesitation in taking this step.** If the accused is willing to do so, it would be a significant factor in his favour at any future bail hearing. If he continues to decline, the inference must be that the phone's contents are adverse to him.

9. COURT'S OBSERVATIONS AND ANGUISH:

9.1. This Court is constrained to express its profound anguish at the state of the record in the present proceedings. A matter that ought to be relatively straightforward — a cyber fraud case with a clear digital money trail — has been complicated, obfuscated, and rendered murky by the conduct of **all three protagonists**: the accused, the victim, and the investigating officer. Each, for their own reasons, appears to be less than fully forthcoming with the Court, and the casualty is the truth that it is this Court's function to ascertain.

9.2. The accused is playing hide and seek. He has filed before this Court only those portions of the electronic record that he calculates are favourable to him, while carefully withholding everything that might be adverse. He has filed the victim's messages to him — messages that speak of intimacy and voluntary payments. He has not filed his own messages to the victim — messages that might reveal inducement, coercion, false promises, or manipulation. He has not filed the e-cash vouchers, the exchanger's receipts, or the gaming application records. He has refused to cooperate with forensic examination of his phone. **An accused who claims innocence and yet withholds selective evidence is not helping himself or this Court.**

9.3. The victim and complainant are playing a different kind of game. A judicial officer — a person who is herself entrusted with the solemn duty of

dispensing justice, of upholding truth before the law, and of expecting others who appear before her to present the complete facts — has chosen to approach this Court obliquely, through her maid's name, rather than coming forward herself. This Court acknowledges the profound personal embarrassment and professional sensitivity that a judicial officer must feel upon discovering that she has been ensnared in a honey trap. The vulnerability of a person in that situation invites understanding, not condemnation. However, **the officer's personal discomfort cannot be permitted to compromise the integrity of a criminal investigation.** A complaint filed in an incomplete or misleading manner, designed to protect the victim's identity at the cost of obscuring the facts, creates exactly the kind of evidentiary confusion that is now before this Court. The victim Harshali Chowdhary, being a judicial officer, is better placed than most to understand that **the path to justice requires candour.** She should, at the earliest opportunity, come before the IO — or, if she so chooses, before the Ld. Magistrate and place on record the complete and unvarnished truth: her full WhatsApp communication history with the accused, her Tinder chat history, her own understanding of why she made the payments she made, and who directed, suggested, or induced those payments. Until she does so, the prosecution case will remain partially constructed and will continue to invite the very challenges the accused is raising.

9.4. This Court also records its serious displeasure at the conduct of the Investigating Officer, SI Ajit Dadarwal. An IO investigating a cyber fraud of over Rs. 52 lakhs involving a Judicial Officer is expected to bring to the task the highest standards of professional diligence, impartiality, and

thoroughness. The IO in the present matter has fallen significantly short of these standards. Specifically:

- a) The IO has not obtained and placed before this Court the Tinder chat history of either party, despite the Tinder application being the stated origin of the relationship and despite the fact that both parties' Tinder accounts and chat histories are recoverable from their respective devices or from the platform.
- b) The IO has not extracted the WhatsApp chat history from the victim Harshali Chowdhary's device, which would contain the complete and unedited communication thread — including the messages sent by the accused — that is most material to the case.
- c) The IO failed to comply with the specific direction of this Court to verify the physical meeting at Drishti Dreamscapes, Saket, New Delhi, despite the booking confirmation being available in the very chats filed by the accused.
- d) The IO has uncritically accepted the complainant's implausible statement that the Rs. 5,00,000/- cash deposit was from Diksha Devi's own accumulated savings, without verifying the source of the cash, recording the statement of "Ashish" the court peon who made the deposit, or explaining how Diksha Devi — a domestic worker — came to possess five lakh rupees in cash when she had not contributed a single rupee to any earlier digital transaction.
- e) The IO has not identified, investigated, or taken any action against the entities "Lakshyatatabux Technologies" and "Shopperoo Vault Private Limited" through which large amounts of money were routed, and which appear to be central to the financial architecture of the alleged fraud.

f) The IO appears to have proceeded on the basis of the complainant's narrative without adequate independent corroboration through the available digital and documentary evidence.

9.5. This Court wishes to observe that the IO's apparent reluctance to aggressively collect electronic evidence from the victim and complainant side may — and this Court only flags the possibility — reflect an institutional hesitation to press a Judicial Officer for evidence in a sensitive personal matter. If that is the case, it is misplaced. The IO's duty is to investigate the truth impartially, without fear or favour, regardless of the status of the parties. The status of the victim as a Judicial Officer should, if anything, be a reason for greater diligence, not lesser — because the integrity of the judicial system demands that the full truth emerge from a matter that involves one of its own officers.

9.6. This Court reiterates, with feeling: **the documents do not lie**. The bank statement shows that transaction after transaction was made from the accounts of Harshali Chowdhary. The pay-in slip shows that the court peon of Harshali Chowdhary deposited the final cash. The WhatsApp chats — even in their incomplete, one-sided form — show a pattern of payments coordinated with intimate communications. The booking confirmation shows a physical meeting was arranged. What is missing is the full story — and the full story can only emerge if all parties place all the evidence before the Court and the investigator. Until that happens, this Court is constrained to work with an incomplete record. In the meantime, the accused — having received a large sum of money into his account, having withheld material evidence, having refused to cooperate with investigation of his phone, and having prior criminal antecedents — must remain in custody.

10. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION ON BAIL:

10.1. While this Court acknowledges the established principle that bail is the rule and jail is the exception, particularly in matters involving offences punishable up to seven years (as affirmed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Satendra Kumar Antil v. CBI**, 2021, and reaffirmed in subsequent pronouncements), the said principle does not operate in isolation or as an absolute bar to custodial detention in appropriate cases. The Court must holistically consider: (a) the nature, gravity, and circumstances of the alleged offence; (b) the character, antecedents, and social standing of the accused; (c) the possibility of the accused fleeing from justice; (d) the risk of tampering with evidence or influencing or intimidating witnesses; and (e) the interests of justice in the overall facts and circumstances. It must also be borne in mind that at the bail stage, the Court does not conduct a mini-trial but only assesses the prima facie material available on record.

10.2. In the present case, the following circumstances, viewed cumulatively, weigh decisively against the grant of bail at this stage:

- a) The accused has received a sum exceeding Rs. 52 lakhs, the overwhelming bulk of which flows directly and traceably from the accounts of a Judicial Officer who is the real victim in this case. The money trail in the bank statement is unambiguous.
- b) The accused has actively withheld material evidence: his own communications to the victim have not been placed on record; the e-cash vouchers from the exchanger are absent; the gaming application records are absent; and he has refused to provide the mobile phone password, impeding forensic investigation. This conduct amounts to active obstruction of the investigation.

- c) The accused's mobile phone is currently under analysis. Premature release on bail creates a real risk that the accused, who has already demonstrated a willingness to suppress evidence, may take steps to compromise or destroy other digital evidence that has not yet been secured.
- d) The victim is a serving Judicial Officer. The risk of the accused — if released — approaching or influencing a Judicial Officer or trying to pressurize her using intimate material, even indirectly, is a consideration that this Court cannot discount.
- e) The accused has criminal antecedents, having been named in FIR No. 62/2019, P.S. Gazipur, under Section 420 IPC — an offence of cheating. This antecedent, while not determinative, is a factor relevant to the Court's assessment of the accused's character and propensity to reoffend.
- f) The investigation is still at an early stage and several material lines of inquiry remain unexplored, including the identity and role of the exchanger entities, the source of the cash deposit, and the full electronic record of both parties. The accused's release at this juncture may frustrate the completion of these inquiries.

10.3. Having considered the entire material on record, the arguments advanced by Ld. Counsel on both sides, the nature and gravity of the alleged offences, the stage of investigation, the conduct of the accused in actively withholding material evidence, the status of the victim, and all the foregoing considerations, this Court is of the firm view that the present is not a fit case for the grant of bail at this stage. The application is accordingly liable to be dismissed.

11. **ORDER:**

11.1. In view of the foregoing discussion, findings, and observations, the present 1st Bail Application filed by the applicant/accused Deepak Vats under Section 483 of the BNSS, 2023 in connection with E-FIR No. 29/2026, P.S. Special Cell, IFSO, Delhi, U/s 308, 318(4), 319 and 340 BNS, 2023, is hereby **DISMISSED**.

11.2. The Investigating Officer, SI Ajit Dadarwal, IFSO Special Cell, is directed to forthwith take the following steps and file a compliance report before Ld. Trial Court within four weeks:

- a) Obtain and preserve the complete WhatsApp chat data from the mobile phone of the victim Harshali Chowdhary for the relevant period, containing both the messages sent by her and those received by her from the accused/any other person relevant to this case;
- b) Obtain and preserve the Tinder account data and chat history of both the complainant Diksha Devi and the victim Harshali Chowdhary for the relevant period, including by making formal preservation requests to Tinder's service provider under applicable law;
- c) Verify and place on record whether the parties physically met at Drishti Dreamscapes, Saket, New Delhi, on or around 10.12.2025 and 03.01.2026, by obtaining booking records, check-in records, and CCTV footage if available from the said accommodation;
- d) Record the full statement of "Ashish", the court peon attached to Harshali Chowdhary, regarding the cash deposit of Rs. 5,00,000/- at Axis Bank, Narnaul Branch on 13.01.2026; independently verify and establish the true source of this cash; and record the statement of Harshali Chowdhary in this regard;

- e) Investigate the identity, registration, and role of the entities "Lakshyatatabux Technologies" and "Shopperoo Vault Private Limited" which received large sums from the accused's account, and trace the onward movement of those funds; and
- f) Expedite the analysis of the accused's mobile phone.
- 11.3. It is open to the applicant/accused to approach the learned Magistrate Court with an application to open his mobile phone in open court, in the presence of the IO and counsel for both parties, for the purpose of demonstrating the transactions, gaming application records, exchanger communications, and any other material relevant to his defence. This Court is of the view that such a course of action, if adopted, would be a significant step towards establishing the truth and would be taken into account at any future bail hearing as a demonstration of good faith and transparency.
- 11.4. The dismissal of this application shall not preclude the applicant/accused from filing a fresh bail application in the event of a material change in circumstances, including upon the completion of analysis of the mobile phone.
- 11.5. A copy of this order be supplied to Ld. Counsel for the applicant/accused, and to the IO for information and strict compliance of the directions issued herein.
- 11.6. Copy be also sent to Jail Superintendent concerned for information.
- 11.7. Copy of the order be sent to DCP, IFSO to monitor the investigation and guide the IO.

(SAURABH PARTAP SINGH LALER)
ASJ-05/New Delhi District
PHC / New Delhi / 09.06.2026