Bidhannagar police bust SIM box racket, arrest one

Kolkata: Acting information received from confidential sources, West Bengal's Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate has busted an illegal SIM box racket and arrested a person in connection with the case, police said on Sunday.

Officers of the Commissionerate's Intelligence Department raided flat number 5B on the fifth floor of a residential building in Hatiara in the Rajarhat area near Kolkata on Saturday and busted the ring.

The items recovered by the team in this search include- 9 SIM box machines, more than 2,500 active SIM cards, multiple keypad mobile and Android devices, networking equipment used for VoIP routing and GSM termination, routers, cables, power units and other accessories.

According to police sources, although it appeared to be a flat for ordinary residents from the outside, sophisticated telecom operations were being run illegally inside.

According to intelligence sources, international calls were being connected to India illegally from that flat. Through the sophisticated SIM box device, VoIP calls coming from abroad were converted into local or domestic calls and sent directly to the Indian network. As a result, the illegal international gateway exchange and telecom regulatory system were being completely bypassed. Due to this, the government was facing a huge revenue loss, according to police sources.

During the raid, the police caught the accused Abir Sheikh alias Monirul Islam Sajib, one of the gang members, red-handed inside the flat.

Investigators claimed that the accused was operating multiple SIM box devices in an active state.

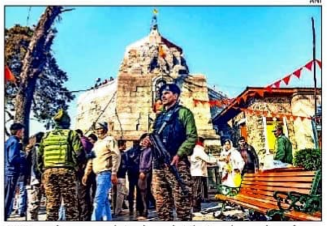
During the initial interrogation, he confessed to being involved in the racket.

Bidhannagar Commissionerate officials are interrogating the accused in custody to know more about the ring. An official of the Intelligence Department of the Bidhannagar Commissionerate said: "Such illegal SIM box operations can not only cause loss to telecom revenue but also pose a major threat to national security. A deeper investigation is on to find who else is involved in this." AGENCIES

Security agencies bust massive 'mule account' network in J&K

Fear Misuse By Terror Groups

ANI



CRPF security personnel stand guard at the temple premises of Shankaracharya Temple on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, in Srinagar on Sunday

New Delhi/Srinagar: Security agencies have busted an ever-growing ecosystem of "mule accounts" in Jammu and Kashmir that serves as the financial backbone of global scam networks, with officials fearing that the funds routed through these accounts could be used for separatist and anti-national activities.

The officials said more than 8,000 mule accounts operating in the region have been identified and frozen over a period of three years, exposing a sophisticated network of money laundering.

They described these accounts as the "weakest yet most crucial link" in the cybercrime chain, as without them, the conversion of stolen money into untraceable cryptocurrency would be impossible.

Central security agencies have asked the Jammu and Kashmir Police and other law enforcement agencies to hold consultations with banks to curb the mushrooming of 'mule accounts' and identify middlemen, commonly referred to as "mulers", who facilitate such financial frauds, they said.

Officials suspect that after the National Investigation Agency's 2017 crackdown on the flow of illicit money into Jammu and Kashmir, anti-national elements may have shifted to a newer model of "digital hawala", wherein commissions earned by mule account holders or mulers may be used for activities against the country.

A muler is typically not the person who contacts victims or sends fake links. Instead, their role is covert but critical -- arranging and maintaining a steady supply of mule accounts that scammers use to receive and transfer stolen money without revealing their own identities.

These mule accounts often belong to ordinary people lured with promises of "easy commission" and assured minimal risk. They are persuaded to hand over full control of their bank accounts, including net banking credentials, under the pretext that the accounts will be used briefly as "parking accounts".

A single scammer is often supplied with 10 to 30 mule accounts at a time, and in many cases, bank accounts are opened in the name of fictitious companies, enabling large transactions of up to Rs 40 lakh in a single day without immediately raising alarms.

Officials said the money trail is deliberately messy, with the scammed money rapidly shifted through several accounts and broken into smaller transactions to avoid detection.

Central security agencies and other law enforcement organisations have emphasised that while mule account holders may not design the scams or speak to the victims, they are active facilitators of money laundering. By sharing credentials and accepting commissions, they knowingly provide the "financial infrastructure" for transnational crime.

"The entire scam ecosystem depends on these accounts. Without a destination for the money, the scam fails at the first step. Those renting out their accounts are not just victims of circumstance; they are the engines of the crime," a senior official said. PTI

Docs formed terror group 'Ansar Interim' for J&K, hinterland attacks

New Delhi/Srinagar: The 'white-collar' terror module recently busted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police indicates that the doctors arrested in the case had been radicalised since 2016 and formed a new terror organisation named "Ansar Interim" to carry out subversive activities in the Union Territory as well as in the hinterland, officials said on Sunday.

The case, which is now being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), also brings to light that Dr Umer-un Nabi – the man behind the wheel of the explosive-laden car that exploded outside the Red Fort on November 10, killing over a dozen people – had unsuccessfully attempted to join terror groups in 2016 and 2018, they said.

Piecing together evidence gathered so far, officials said the accused doctors – Muzamil Gannie, Umer-un Nabi (now dead), and Adeel Rather, along with his brother Muzzafar Rather (absconding), as well as Maulvi Irfan, Qari Aamir, and Tufail Gazi met at Eidgah in downtown Srinagar in April 2022.

During the meeting, they decided to form a terror organisation "Ansar Interim," with Adeel named as the 'Ameer' (chief) of the group, Maulvi Irfan as 'Deputy Ameer,' and Gannie as treasurer, officials said, adding that among militant groups, "Ansar" is commonly associated with the globally banned terror outfit Al-Qaeda.

> **Adeel had started to look for members for the new terror group and roped in an individual named Danish, alias Jasir, from South Kashmir**

The arrested doctors and preachers told the interrogators that the need to form a new group emerged because all their contacts with active terrorists had been severed, officials said. Roles and operational codes were assigned to the members during the meeting.

Umer assumed the role of coordinator and, along with Gannie, handled finances and procurement.

It was in 2023 that the group decided to acquire fertiliser from the Sohna and Nuh areas of Haryana. On the instructions of Umer, NPK (commonly known as Potassium Nitrate in this context) was also procured from a chemical shop in Faridabad.

During interrogation, the arrested doctors said Umer began watching online videos to learn rudimentary Improvised Explosive Device (IED) construction and had managed to prepare Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP), one of the most notable peroxide explosives, which has been used in several terrorist attacks as the explosive filling for IEDs.

According to officials, Adeel had started to look for members for the new terror group and roped in an individual named Danish, alias Jasir, from South Kashmir.

Adeel took Danish to a rented accommodation within Al-Falah University in Faridabad, where both saw Umer and Gannie preparing TATP explosive materials.

Umer later tried to persuade Danish to carry out a 'fidayeen' (suicide) attack, but he backed out at the last minute, citing his poor economic condition and the belief that suicide was forbidden in Islam.

Umer, a 28-year-old doctor from Pulwama, is believed to have been the most radicalised member and key operative in a network spanning Kashmir, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. Officials suspect he was planning a powerful Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) blast. PTI