PRESS RELEASE
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The Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Hyderabad Zonal Office, conducted search operations on 15 September 2026 under Section 17 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 at four premises located in Patiala, Pune and Chandigarh, in connection with an ongoing investigation into a fake call centre scam targeting nationals of the United States. The searches were conducted on the basis of material gathered during the investigation and subsequent field verification, which indicated that a group of persons, acting in association with others, was operating and controlling call centres at Patiala and Pune.

During the search operations, three live call centres were detected, two at Patiala and one at Pune. Around 220 persons were found working at these call centres at the time of the searches. Their identities, assigned roles and reporting structures are being recorded and verified. The premises were equipped with multiple workstations, cubicles, computers, headsets, mobile phones and networking equipment. It has been revealed that the call centres were engaged in making calls to US nationals and allegedly inducing them to make payments under false pretexts.

Further, at the time of search operations, the call centres held in Patiala were found to be engaged in cheating and extorting US nationals. Mobile phones and a laptop recovered from the persons operating the centres were found to contain data relating to the modus operandi of the syndicate and the distribution of the proceeds generated by defrauding victims. Similarly, the same modus operandi of defrauding was found to be done from the fake call centre being operated from Pune premises.

The residential premises searched at Chandigarh were being used by the mastermind for coordinating and controlling the fake call centres operating at Patiala. Multiple digital devices containing data relating to the functioning of the call centres were found at the premises. A person allegedly involved in processing and converting the proceeds from US Dollars into Indian Rupees was also found operating from these premises, and his role and the related financial transactions are under examination.

As a result of search and seizure proceedings, large number of digital devices including 66 mobile phones, 13 laptops, hard disks and other communication equipment, cash and records were found and seized. The investigation is examining, inter alia, the calling campaigns, scripts, dialler and VoIP-based systems, victim-related data, payment channels, the persons managing and controlling the operations, and the flow of funds generated through the alleged activities. The material and digital evidence recovered is being examined in detail to ascertain the complete modus operandi, identify all persons involved, establish linkages among the searched premises and trace the Proceeds of Crime.

Further investigation is under progress.

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<u>Photographs Taken During the Search Operations</u>

Photograph 1: Call-centre floor at one of the searched premises in Patiala

Photograph 2: Workstations at the Patiala call centre during the search

Photograph 3: Cubicles and computer workstations at the Patiala premises

Photograph 4: Operational area of the call centre searched at Pune