POCSO probe: Chennai Police issue 'Look Out Circulars' against five persons – what is an LOC?

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News

As reported: the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Greater Chennai Police, probing POCSO cases against Gem Granites owner R. Veeramani and others, issued Look Out Circulars (LOCs) to stop five persons believed to hold documents/information relevant to the probe from leaving India. One of them, his daughter Archana Veeramani, was reportedly stopped at Chennai International Airport on 23 Oct 2026 while trying to fly to Singapore, questioned about financial transactions, and later allowed to return home as she said she felt unwell. The reports do not describe her as an accused.

Key facts

What is an LOC	A directive to immigration authorities to watch, stop or detain a named person leaving/entering India
Executed by	Bureau of Immigration (BoI) – Union Ministry of Home Affairs (1971)
Legal basis	No specific statute – MHA Office Memoranda: 27.10.2010, amendment 5.12.2017, 2018 amendment, consolidated guidelines 22.02.2021
Who can request	Designated officers – Deputy Secretary (GoI), Joint Secretary (State), District Magistrate, SP; officers of CBI, ED, DRI, RAW, SFIO; criminal court orders

Validity	2010 OM: one year; 2021 OM: in force until the originating agency seeks deletion
Remedy	Representation to originating agency; writ under Article 226 in the High Court

Background

- History: LOC guidelines began with a 1979 MHA letter, then a 2000 memorandum; the OM of 27 Oct 2010 set today's framework. The 2017 amendment allowed an LOC even without a criminal case if departure would hurt India's sovereignty, security, bilateral relations, economic interests or the 'larger public interest'. A 2018 amendment let heads of public sector banks seek LOCs against wilful defaulters.
- Constitution: Satwant Singh Sawhney v. D. Ramarathnam (1967) – the Supreme Court held that the right to travel abroad is part of 'personal liberty' under Article 21; the Passports Act 1967 followed. Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978) – any procedure curtailing it must be fair, just and reasonable.
- Court rulings: Sumer Singh Salkan (Delhi HC, 2010) – LOC only in cognisable offences where the accused evades arrest; it is executive action open to judicial review. Vikas Chaudhary (Delhi HC, 2022) – no LOC on a mere suspicion of holding foreign bank accounts. Bombay HC (April 2024) struck down the clause allowing public sector banks to seek LOCs.
- LOC vs Interpol notices: an LOC works only at India's own exit/entry points. Interpol notices (HQ Lyon, France; India's National Central Bureau is the CBI) are global: Red Notice – to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition; Blue Notice – to collect information on a person's identity, location or activities; Yellow – missing persons.

Tamil Nadu link: In Karti P. Chidambaram v. Bureau of Immigration (2018), the Madras High Court held that its judicial-review power under Article 226 includes the power to cancel an LOC. In this news, the LOC was issued by the Greater Chennai Police SIT and enforced at Chennai International Airport.

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