



**Press Release**

**23.6.2023**

Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has arrested Wasim Bawla on 22-6-2023 under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 in connection with ongoing investigation in smuggling of foreign origin betel nuts via Indo Myanmar Border by shell entities based in the North-East without payment of customs duty, thereby, causing loss to the Government.

ED initiated money laundering investigation on basis of FIR registered by CBI, ACB, Nagpur. During the preliminary investigation, it is found that DRI had conducted investigation against various traders in Nagpur who were procuring foreign origin betel nuts. ED conducted searches at the premises of various persons and during the searches, various incriminating documents and electronic devices were also seized. ED investigation revealed that large amounts were transferred to few Assam based parties which were ultimately withdrawn in cash which was suspected to be used for purchase of smuggled foreign origin betel nuts. The foreign origin betel nuts were transported to Nagpur by fabricating domestic invoices, transportation bills etc. Investigation revealed that Wasim Bawla was actively involved in smuggling of foreign origin betel nuts through his active association with traders from Assam, transporters, warehouse owners and shell entities which lent bogus invoices to facilitate the sale purchase of betel nuts in Nagpur region.

Wasim Bawla had made all the efforts to evade ED investigation by changing phones frequently, not responding to ED's summons, not participating in the search proceedings despite being in Nagpur. Further, Wasim Bawla had used ill gotten proceeds of smuggling to 'purchase' secret official documents by bribing contractual staff of ED. Wasim Bawla had given contradictory answers in his statements and his conduct is evasive and untruthful. Hence, Wasim Bawla was arrested on 22.06.2023. On production before the Hon'ble Special PMLA Court Mumbai, he has been sent to ED Custody for 8 days, till 30.06.2023.

Further investigation in the case is under progress.

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