Press Release
05.11.2026

Enforcement Directorate (ED), Agartala Sub-Zonal Office has conducted search and seizure operations on 04.11.2026 under Section 17 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 at 13 premises of the persons and entities located in Tripura, West Bengal and Maharashtra, connected with an alleged fake Government tender racket operated through a fictitious entity named 'Directorate of Higher Education'. The searches were conducted in connection with an ongoing money-laundering investigation arising from FIR registered at Capital Complex Police Station, West Tripura, Tripura.

The FIR was registered on the complaint of M/s SK Sales Corporation, Nagpur, against Abhishek Chandra, IAS (Tripura Cadre) and co-conspirators, alleging that the firm was fraudulently induced to pay Earnest Money Deposits (EMDs) of approximately Rs. 14.55 crore between September 2024 and February 2025 against purported tenders of the Government of Tripura in the mid-day meal and power sectors, which were never floated. The offences registered under Sections 61(2), 316, 318(4), 319(2), 336(3), 338, 340(2) and 341(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, relating to criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust, cheating, cheating by personation and forgery, are scheduled offences under the PMLA, 2002. Accordingly, the ED recorded an ECIR and initiated investigation under the PMLA, 2002.

Investigation has revealed that Abhishek Chandra, IAS (presently under suspension) represented himself as the officer controlling tender processes in the Government of Tripura and introduced the complainant to one Utpal Kumar Chowdhury as the official responsible for processing payments. The EMDs were paid through demand drafts in favour of 'Directorate of Higher Education', which was, in fact, a proprietary concern of Utpal Kumar Chowdhury bearing a name deceptively similar to the genuine Government department. Forged tender notices and work orders were allegedly used, and a joint venture with Smt. Krishna Chakraborty, represented by her husband Sudip Paul, was used to structure the collection of funds. Partial 'refunds' were made at critical junctures to sustain the confidence of the victim and induce further payments.

The funds credited into the fictitious entity's accounts were allegedly layered within days, and in some instances within 24 hours, through a network of shell entities, several of which are registered in the names of domestic staff and associates of Utpal Kumar Chowdhury. The proceeds of crime were allegedly utilised for acquisition of immovable properties, including flats in a housing project and a residential property in

Shivaji Park, Mumbai, in the names of family members of Abhishek Chandra, as well as for foreign travel and luxury goods. Funds were also allegedly routed through an alleged hawala conduit based in Kolkata.

It is pertinent to mention that ED is already investigating Utpal Kumar Chowdhury and others under ECIR/AGSZO/03/2025, arising out of five FIRs registered in West Bengal and Tripura, wherein the same fictitious entity and modus operandi were used to defraud multiple victims of an aggregate amount exceeding Rs. 44 crore. In that case, Provisional Attachment Orders No. 01/2026 dated 22.01.2026 and No. 05/2026 dated 31.07.2026 have already been issued.

The search proceedings were conducted in the residential premises of Abhishek Chandra, IAS and hawala operators and also in the office premises of several companies/entities connected to the money trail. During the course of search proceedings, voluminous documentary evidences of hawala transactions, several high value property details and other evidences indicating suspicious control over corporate entities were found and seized. Further, digital devices and records belonging to various accused persons crucial to the current investigation, were also seized.

Further investigation is under progress.