PRESS RELEASE
15.01.2026

Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Kochi Zonal Office has arrested Aneesh Babu (S/o Shri Babu George), aged 35 years, resident of Kollam, on 14.01.2026 hrs under Section 19(1) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

ED initiated investigation on the basis of multiple FIRs registered by Kerala Police and re-registered by the Crime Branch, Kollam, alleging large-scale cheating of cashew traders. It was revealed that Aneesh Babu, through his entities namely M/s Bi Southern Trade Ltd (Tanzania), M/s Praise Exports FZE (Sharjah) and M/s Vazhavila Cashews (Kollam), induced several traders to part with huge sums of money on the false promise of import and supply of raw cashews from Tanzania/Africa.

ED investigation revealed that advances amounting to approximately Rs. 24.76 Crore were collected from various complainants. However, neither were the cashews supplied nor were the advances refunded. Instead, forged and fabricated documents such as Bills of Lading, SWIFT messages and cheques were provided to mislead the victims. The funds so collected were diverted, layered, concealed and partly retained abroad, thereby generating, possessing, using and projecting the Proceeds of Crime (POC), constituting the offence of money laundering under Section 3 of PMLA, 2002.

During the course of investigation, Aneesh Babu was issued repeated summonses under Section 50 of PMLA since 2021. Except for one appearance on 03.01.2025, his conduct remained non-cooperative and evasive. He consistently failed to produce documents and avoided joining the investigation. His anticipatory bail applications were dismissed by the Sessions Court, Ernakulam, the Hon'ble High Court of Kerala, and the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

On 14.01.2026, the statement of Aneesh Babu was recorded in ED Office where he gave evasive replies and failed to disclose crucial details regarding the utilisation and overseas parking of POC, and considering the likelihood of evidence tampering, influence over witnesses, and evasion of the legal process, he was arrested.

Subsequently, he was produced before the Hon'ble Special Court (PMLA), Ernakulam on 15.01.2026 and the Hon'ble Court has remanded him to judicial custody till 19.01.2026. Earlier, Hon'ble High court while hearing the anticipatory bail application of Aneesh Babu, also opined that his custodial interrogation is required to trace the money trail and ED will trace the POC especially overseas POC, and will identify other persons involved in the money laundering offence.

Further investigation is under progress.