PRESS RELEASE
23/07/2026

ED Panaji Arrests Dubai Resident Nihal V.N. in a Major crackdown on Crypto-Hawala & International Narcotics Money Laundering Syndicate.

In pursuance of the Hon’ble Prime Minister's vision for a “Nasha Mukt Bharat” (Drug-Free India) and aligning with the strategic roadmap outlined by the Hon’ble Union Home Minister on 26th June 2026 at the 10th Apex NCORD meeting, which calls for an aggressive “Detect, Disrupt, and Destroy” strategy to dismantle the financial infrastructure of transnational narco-syndicates, the Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Goa Zonal Office, has arrested Nihal V.N., an ordinary resident of Dubai, under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002. Hon’ble Special Court (PMLA), Goa, has remanded him to ED custody for seven days till 28.07.2026.

The crackdown shifts the focus from individual drug carriers to targeting complete drug-trafficking networks, darknet operators, kingpins, and their cross-border financial facilitators.

The PMLA investigation revealed that Nihal V.N., operating out of Dubai, served as a primary financial node and money launderer for international drug lords operating across multiple continents.

He processed cash and illegal proceeds generated from illicit drug sales in India and converted substantial Proceeds of Crime generated from illegal narcotic drug business into various cryptocurrencies and Foreign Exchange.

The laundered crypto and foreign currency were routed to international cartels and suppliers based in Brazil and Thailand to finance the procurement of high-grade narcotic substances and synthetic drugs intended for smuggling into India.

Forensic and digital investigations have already identified multiple illicit crypto-wallets, offshore bank accounts, and domestic shell entities used to launder Proceeds of Crime.

Earlier the ED, Panaji Zonal Office, had conducted search operations at 26 premises across multiple States, including Goa, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu Karnataka, Odisha and Delhi, under PMLA, 2002, in the same case pursuant to the ECIR registered by the ED on the basis of an FIR registered by the Anti-Narcotics Cell, Goa Police, under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, for trafficking of narcotic substances in commercial quantities and the existence of a well-organized inter-State drug trafficking syndicate was revealed. Further, the distribution of narcotic substances on a business-to-business (B2B) basis was traced across multiple States, namely Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Kerala. The ED had seized approx. 3 Crore cash, alongwith incriminating documents and digital devices. Earlier in this case, main accused Madhupan SS was arrested on 17/01/2026 under section 19 of the PMLA, 2002. He is currently under judicial custody.

ED remains firmly committed to dismantling organised drug trafficking networks and disrupting the financial channels used for laundering the Proceeds of Crime. ED reiterates its resolve to combat drug trafficking and money laundering through the effective and comprehensive use of the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and other relevant laws.

ED continues to act decisively to dismantle drug trafficking networks by targeting their financial foundations. By identifying, tracing, and attaching properties acquired from drug-related proceeds, the ED is strengthening the national mission to achieve a drug-free India. This operation underscores the ED’s sustained efforts to curb the illegal drug trade, trace and attach Proceeds of Crime, and deliver a strong deterrent message against such unlawful activities.

Further investigation in the matter is ongoing to identify all beneficiaries and facilitators and to trace assets generated from the illicit activities.